Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية ،الرأي،

Volume 21 Number 6140 AMMAN SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1996, RAMADAN 15, 1416 Price: Jordan 150 Fils

Recount ordered in Ramallah

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Two weeks after the first Palestinian elections, officials ordered a recount Sunday of 18 ballot boxes in the Ramallah district. The recount was ordered because officials auditing the results could not find the documents listing the vote totals from each box, said Gabi Baramki, a Central Election Commission official. Only 16 of 162 ballot boxes were affected he said. The recount will be held Sunday at Bir Zeit University in Ramallah. Mr. Baraki said the 18 ballot boxes hold about 9,000 votes. He said he did not expect the recount to affect the outcome of the Ramallah voting, in which Yasser Arafat was the overwhelming choice for president and seven candidates were elected to council seats. "It's unlikely, but I don't want to take a chance," he said. One of the losing candidates, however, said the recount would not be valid because the ballot boxes had not been properly supervised since the election.

Cabinet allocates JD 250,000 to needy

AMMAN (Petra) — The Cabinet on Saturday decided to allocate JD 250,000 to be used for purchasing food supplies to be distributed to needy families during the month of Ramadan and 'Eid Al Fitr. A specialised ministerial committee was entrusted with preparing a study on the needs of the poor and distributing food supplies to them. The Cabinet's decision was taken in implementation of Royal directives. The Council of Ministers also approved raising the capital of the government-owned Cities and Villages Development Bank to JD 25 million, up from JD 12 million. It also approved a regulation on the works of tourism and travel agencies. The regulation governs the issuance of licences to agencies and facilitates the work of the Ministry of Tourism in monitoring the performance of these agencies. In addition, the Cabinet also approved allowing the Ministry of Tourism to sign a contract with a major Canadian establishment to promote Jordan's touristic attractions in Canada. In other decisions, the Cabinet appointed Jordan's resident Ambassador to Morocco Nayef Al Hadid as the non-resident ambassador to Mauritania.

Kabariti in intense consultations to form cabinet

• *New parliamentary coalition likely to determine shape*

Revival of economy, internal and information policies top agenda

By Nermeen Murad
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prime Minister-designate Abdul Karim Kabariti began consultations with parliamentary blocs Saturday to form a new Cabinet of about 25 to 28 members which he hopes to base around about 12 professional, hand-picked non-parliamentarians in the main political and economic ministries.

Mr. Kabariti is keeping the names of the "select 12" under a tight lid in an apparent bid to avoid undermining his negotiations with parliamentary blocs which may assume a defiant posture if they feel that the main portfolios are filled by outsiders.

Informed sources told the Jordan Times that Mr. Kabariti's preliminary meetings with representatives of the blocs Saturday had dashed his hopes at minimising the number of Parliament members in his Cabinet as it became apparent that the passage of his government through a parliamentary vote of confidence would not be secure without allocating ministerial seats to about 15 influential deputies.

According to the sources, Mr. Kabariti's starting position was that the different parliamentary blocs should back, or withhold support from, his government based on agreement or disagreement policies he would pursue and not on the basis of who gets what ministerial posts.

But as a result of yesterday's meetings, it became apparent that the various blocs insisted on reflecting their parliamentary strengths in Cabinet portfolios.

The prime minister-designate's biggest and most immediate challenge thus became how to form a Cabinet that has a strong enough parliamentary base and at the same time make it operative enough to tackle what he considers to be his top priorities: the economy, the internal situation and the media.

Mr. Kabariti is understood to be keen on introducing change on the economic front, basically to revitalise the economy. While he is expected to retain most members of the present economic team, he will want to use his own economic expertise in guiding the economic policies of the Kingdom.

On this level, sources expected that Mr. Kabariti will be looking for a professional minister of finance to replace veteran minister Basel Jardaneh if the latter does not choose to remain in his post. Preliminary indications Saturday were that the prime minister-designate will retain Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb as well as Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Samih Darwazah, but it was far from certain that Mr. Jardaneh would stay on. Several candidates surfaced as possible successors, most prominent among them are Abdullah Nsour, a former minister and currently a deputy, Jawad Hadid, a prominent banker, and Bassam Saket, a former minister and a prominent economist.

The ministries of the interior and justice, both seen as the axis of the new government's internal policies, are expected to change hands.

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Technicalities delay formal appointment

LAST MINUTE hitches delayed the official announcement Saturday of the appointment of Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti as prime minister-designate and the resignation of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and his government.

According to well-informed sources, the letter of appointment was ready to be released by the Royal Court yesterday, but the formality was delayed due to Mr. Kabariti's busy meetings with parliamentary blocs and independent candidates. His schedule delayed the finalising of a letter of reply to the letter of appointment, which is traditionally made ready before an official announcement is made.

Also, according to the sources, another reason might have been that Sharif Zeid's government, which was preparing a letter of resignation failed to meet early Saturday and meet the deadline for the announcement usually by the eight o'clock news. The kitchen cabinet of Sharif Zeid's government met at 7:00 p.m. and a meeting of the whole Cabinet took place at 8:00 p.m., the sources said.

Another reason cited by the sources was that Mr. Kabariti did not want to be rushed into forming a government and that he wanted to finish consultations with all possible members of his cabinet by Sunday morning.

"The prime minister-designate's task is made easier when he gets one more day without the limelight and attention that would come with an official announcement of him being asked to form a government," said one source.

Sharif Zeid is scheduled to leave on a private visit to London on Monday. While some speculated that the government change would not take place before Thursday, the sources said the change was most likely to be completed before Sharif Zeid's departure for London.

Palace and official media sources confirmed that an official announcement will be made today with rising expectations that Mr. Kabariti will be ready to announce his final cabinet make-up as scheduled on Monday.

Islamists hail meeting with Kabariti, but 'most probably' will withhold confidence

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Islamists will neither participate in nor are they likely to vote in Parliament in favour of the new Cabinet of Abdul Karim Kabariti but relations between the government and the largest party in the Kingdom are poised to improve especially after the Islamists received assurances from Mr. Kabariti that a controversial election draft law which the government has just circulated would be withdrawn and a "better" one will be introduced.

Enhancement of "public freedoms will be a task I will shoulder personally," Mr. Kabariti was quoted as telling Islamist leaders in a meeting Saturday morning.

Ishaq Farhan, secretary general of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) party which represents the largest coalition of Islamists in the Kingdom, described the meeting he attended with Mr. Kabariti as "warm" and said he expected "fruitful cooperation" to ensue between the front and the new government.

"At this stage we will not participate in the government," Dr. Farhan told the Jordan Times. "We wish Mr. Kabariti all the success in his mission and we are ready to cooperate with him on issues of national concern."

In addition to Dr. Farhan, the meeting was attended by IAF spokesperson Hamzeh Mansour, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood Abdul Majid Thuneibat and former speaker of the Lower House of Parliament and now Senator Abdul Latif Arabiyat. Mr. Kabariti was not accompanied by aides during the meeting.

Although IAF members will not participate in the new Cabinet, sources close to the Islamists believe that the government will include independent Islamists that are close to and supported by the front, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood. The sources believed that Bashir Jaghbeer, secretary general of the Ministry of Public Works, is among the favourites for one of the portfolios.

The anticipated designation of Mr. Jaghbeer, who is also an active unionist, sources say, is expected to improve relations not only between the Islamists and the government but also between the government and the professional unions which have been at loggerheads over the issue of normalisation of ties with Israel.

Dr. Farhan told the Jordan Times that the front does not

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Awn Khasawneh

Khasawneh – new Royal Court chief

Qasem, advisors Keilani, Hikmat, Alaeddin resign

By Nermeen Murad
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A Royal Decree on Saturday announced the appointment of 45-year-old Awn Khasawneh as the new chief of the Royal Court in what is seen as another step towards instituting change in the Kingdom's leading political institutions and ensuring a harmonious relationship between the Palace and the new government to be headed by Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti.

A Royal Court statement announced the resignation of Mr. Marwan Kassem from his post as Royal Court chief as well as the resignation of three of the King's advisors, Mohammad Rasoul Keilani,

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King, Mubarak exchange views

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Saturday exchanged views on regional and international issues. In a telephone conversation, the two leaders also discussed means of enhancing bilateral relations. Mr. Mubarak extended an invitation to the King to visit Egypt.

King honours ex-advisors

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday conferred Al Nahda Medal of the First Order on his outgoing advisors Yanal Hikmat and Tareq Ala'eddin in appreciation of their services. The two, along with another advisor Mohammad Rasoul Al Keilani, submitted their resignation to the King earlier in the day.

Premier empowered to delegate authority

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Ministers on Saturday approved a new regulation empowering the prime minister to give any of his authorities to any of the Cabinet members. Last summer, Ibrahim Izzeddin, a minister for Prime Ministry affairs, resigned after a controversy over whether he could be given any of the prime minister's powers because no such provision had been provided for that in the legislation. The regulation, governing the Prime Ministry's administrative system, reorganises departments at the Prime Ministry and defines their links to the premier and the Prime Ministry's secretary general. It also creates seven new departments at the Prime Ministry.

Arafat blames donors, Israeli closures for economic woes

DAVOS (Agencies) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Saturday criticised business leaders, donor countries and Israel for a lack of cash and economic freedom.

Addressing up to 1,000 members of the world's political and economic elite meeting at the Davos Forum, he said investment into the area had to be increased because the donations received so far did not even cover the losses due to closures of the borders of Gaza and the West Bank.

He said these had amounted to "more than $6 million" per day over 247 days in the last 15 months, in figures that were not confirmed by Israeli officials.

"It is a real disaster for us. All the donations from all the donors have not covered our losses from the closure," he told a session of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in the Swiss Alpine resort of Davos.

"Some of us are in starvation and others have a very high standard of living, so I am not joking when I say we need a real joint Middle East economy," he told the assembled luminaries.

Mr. Arafat warned that a failure to support the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in economic terms could jeopardise the political process towards peace.

"The economy is the basis for creating the appropriate atmosphere to maintain the thrust of a political solution," he said.

Mr. Arafat also criticised international donor countries and institutions for failing to fulfil completely their aid pledges to the autonomous Palestinian territories.

Referring to $865 million pledged at a recent meeting of donors in Paris and $500 not paid from the first time," he said the actual payment of aid had been "meagre and slow."

Mr. Arafat added that Israel was increasing Palestinian economic woes by blocking imports from Egypt and Jordan.

"It is another breach of what we have agreed and signed," he said, adding: "They are squeezing us from importing from Egypt and Jordan."

Mr. Arafat was to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres later in the day. The talks were expected to update progress on economic questions, which have

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Peres hints at early elections

DAVOS (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres on Saturday hinted at early elections in his country, saying they would not necessarily threaten the Middle East peace process.

He said his ideal date would be Oct. 29, but that a definitive time would be fixed by the end of the month, while declining to rule out early ballots.

"Naturally we consider everything. We will decide by the end of the month," he told a press conference on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos.

"The ideal time for me would be the time fixed by the law, which is the 29th of October," he said.

Referring to fears that a change of government in Israel would seriously hit peace talks, he insisted: "This has nothing to do with peace, as whenever we have elections it may serve as an interruption to the negotiations not an end to them."

He said another factor was that political parties in Israel were acting as if the election campaign was already in full swing.

"I am a little bit taken that the campaign has started already," Mr. Peres said.

"One of the consideration is, should we have a campaign for 10 months or four months, because a campaign is not just costly financially, it is also costly in many other ways. You cannot take the necessary decisions," he said.

Mr. Peres told Israeli television that his Labour Party "needed to renew its mandate in order to handle crucial questions."

Israeli Tourism Minister Uzi Baram said on television that he expected the elections to take place on May 21 for the parliament and the first round of the direct election of the prime minister, which will be a first for Israel.

Mr. Peres was speaking shortly after a meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who arrived here Saturday to give a "special address" to the Davos forum on Sunday.

The meeting was a poignant reprise of an encounter the two men had in Davos at the 1994 forum, shortly after the historic peace signing in Washington in September 1993.

(Continued on page 3)

PNA police kill two Islamic Jihad members

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — Palestinian National Authority (PNA) police on Saturday killed two members of the militant Islamic Jihad group during a raid on a house in the Shatti refugee camp in the autonomous Gaza Strip, a witness said.

About a dozen plain-clothes police encircled the house, and five entered saying they were searching for members of the Islamic Jihad, the owner of the residence, Samira Hatif, told AFP.

Two members of the Palestinian faction were hiding in a room and refused to open the door. The police then open fired, killed Ayman Razania and Amar Al Harash. Their bodies were taken to Shiffa Hospital in Gaza city.

"An exchange of fire took place inside the house between security officers and the two wanted men which resulted in the death of the two Islamic Jihad men," Mohammad Dahlan, a senior Palestinian security official, told Reuter.

"We hope that we can overcome this problem and that it will not affect the positive relationship between the two sides," Mr. Dahlan said. He said an investigation was underway.

Islamic Jihad opposes Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's peace deals with Israel. It has launched several suicide bombings in the past two years, killing dozens of Israelis.

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ICRC begins Kabul airlift

KABUL (Agencies) — The first load of emergency food supplies to reach Kabul in two weeks arrived aboard an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) flight Saturday, witnesses said.

Twenty tonnes of food were airlifted to the besieged Afghan capital on a Russian-made Antonov transport plane in the first shipment of a relief operation due to last 17 days, they said.

The main overland supply routes to Kabul have been cut by rival factions to President Burhanuddin Rabbani's government.

The head of the ICRC mission in Afghanistan, Michel Ducraux, told reporters the newly opened air bridge would be used to transport a total 1,000 tonnes of food to the city.

Planes flying out of Peshwar in Pakistan three times daily would carry flour, cooking oil, beans and other foodstuffs to some 18,000 families, or about 100,000 residents, he said.

The official added that the mission was aimed at assisting those particularly at risk, including elderly residents, widows and children.

"At the very least, 80 per cent of the people find themselves in great difficulty," he said.

Supplying Kabul has been difficult over the past several weeks with the main roads from Jalalabad in the east and Pakistan severed by warring factions.

The routes were cut after local commanders began fighting over road taxes levied on vehicles passing through their areas of influence.

Between 80,000 and one million people live in Kabul where a civil war has claimed some 25,000 lives in the capital alone since the fall of a communist regime in April 1992.

The blockade has become more painful now in midwinter, when temperatures fall well-below zero at night and wood for heating is in short supply. Many people live in homes seriously damaged by the war, many without windows.

On Chicken Street, the main market area, beggars are more numerous than they were in the autumn.

However, the shops had an abundance of fruits and vegetables, though meat was in short supply.

"It's not like Somalia. If you have money, you can find food," said Khaled Madjrough, a city resident.

With the economy in tatters and the currency in free-fall against the dollar, money can be an insurmountable problem.

"Without aid, several thousand families will die of hunger," said Mr. Ducraux.

Up to 30 per cent of the city's population do not have enough food to survive the winter, said Peter Stocker, another senior ICRC official.

The United Nations had earlier said if the siege on Kabul was not lifted, the city could be faced with widespread food shortages.

In late January, however, the U.N.'s World Food Programme said there was ample food stockpiles to last through the next two months.

WFP Afghanistan Director Klaus Klawitter warned that the situation could worsen dramatically if the roads into Kabul were not opened.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), meanwhile, warned of a mass exodus from Kabul if fighting in and around the city does not ease.

Over the past four months more than 76,000 people fled Kabul to seek refuge in neighbouring Pakistan, said a UNHCR report released in Geneva.

"There's been no electricity or reliable water supply for over two years," said UNHCR spokesman Ron Redmond. "There are severe fuel and food shortages."

During fierce fighting over Kabul in 1994, more than half a million people fled the city, triggering a refugee crisis for the UNHCR.

Entire city blocks in Kabul have been reduced to rubble in the past three years of civil war, leaving much of the population homeless.

Afghanistan has been ravaged by civil war since 1992, when the communist government was ousted by guerrillas. The rebels then splintered and turned their guns on each other.



KILLED IN GAZA: Islamic Jihad activists lift the body of Amar Al Aaraj who was killed by Palestinian police in Gaza Strip on Saturday. Palestinian police shot dead two wanted activists from Islamic Jihad during an exchange of fire at Shati refugee camp in Gaza (see story on page one) (Reuter photo)

Riyadh blast suspect in S.Arabian custody

RIYADH (Agencies) — Authorities Saturday confirmed they had taken custody of a Saudi Arabian man deported from Pakistan in connection with a deadly car-bombing in Riyadh last year that killed five Americans and two Indians.

Hassan Al Sarai, a Saudi citizen living in Pakistan since 1990, faces an almost certain sentence of beheading by sword if convicted of involvement in the bombing.

It is unclear what role Mr. Sarai is suspected of playing in the bombing. He was arrested earlier in the week by Pakistani federal agents acting on leads provided by Saudi security, a Pakistani Interior Ministry spokesman said Thursday in Islamabad.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency quoted an unnamed Interior Ministry source, its term for a spokesman, as saying the suspect has been handed over to Saudi authorities.

He said this was in the framework of long-standing "security cooperation" between the two countries.

Pakistan said it had deported Mr. Sarai on Thursday, but Saudi authorities did not comment on the case until early Saturday as the weekend neared its end.

After the Nov. 13 blast, Saudi authorities released a sketch of a mustachioed suspect who was seen by a witness minutes before the blast. It was not clear whether Mr. Sarai fits that description.

The three-storey building targeted was the headquarters for a U.S. Army programme that provides American military and civilian advisers to help train the Saudi Arabian National Guard.

There has been no word on the affiliation of those responsible for the blast. Suspicion has focused on Saudi dissidents frustrated with the government's heavy-handed policies towards its critics, or fundamentalists seeking to drive American forces out of the Gulf.

Agents from Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency traced Mr. Sarai through immigration records in the central Pakistani city of Lahore.

Last month, Pakistani Interior Minister Nasirullah Babar met with Saudi officials to discuss the case.

Pakistani reports quoted officials as saying Mr. Sarai fought in Afghanistan during the early 1990s and has also supported militants in the disputed Kashmir region.

Thousands of suspected militants from the Middle East flooded into Pakistan during the 1980s to fight with Afghan rebels against Soviet occupying forces in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Egypt to open 4 new pyramids

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt will open four pyramids for the first time in June, including the "Bent Pyramid," an early botched attempt at building the imposing monuments, an antiquities official said on Saturday.

The monuments were formerly in military zones in the desert some 30 kilometres south of Cairo, but "the army gave us the land three months ago," Zahi Hawass, head of antiquities for Giza, told AFP.

"We are now finishing work to allow visits, installing ticket booths and a small museum at each site. They should be open by June," Mr. Hawass said.

The four pyramids to be opened are in the regions of Dahshur and Abu Sir in the vast pharaonic necropolis of Saqqara which stretches south from the famed Giza Pyramids.

In Dahshur, where a total of 14 pyramids are located, three will be opened: the two pyramids of Senefru, the founder of the 4th Dynasty (around 1,800 B.C.).

At Abu Sir, the funeral complex of the Fifth Dynasty (2,500 B.C.), the most important of the area's 11 pyramids, that of Sahu Ra, will be opened.

They will bring to eight the number of pyramids open to visitors. Egypt boasts a total of 95 pyramids, most of them around Cairo.

Cars will be barred from Dahshur and visitors will be brought to the sites by bus, Mr. Hawass said.

A small museum will also be built at the entrance of Dahshur to hold the discoveries of Ahmad Fakhri, the Egyptian archaeologist who uncovered the valley temple at the Senefru "Bent Pyramid."

The Bent Pyramid, 97 metres (yards) high and 188 metres across at the base, was the ancient Egyptians' first attempt to move beyond the "step" style to the familiar smooth-sided monument shape.

But due to architectural faults, the pyramid has a bent shape. Halfway up the face, the incline changes dramatically from 54.14 degrees to 42.59.

Sight-seeing tours outside Sanaa put on hold following kidnap saga

By Saad Hattar

SANAA (AFP) — Yemeni authorities have ordered sight-seeing tours outside the capital Sanaa on hold as the country tries to avoid repeat of the kidnap of 17 elderly French visitors and protect its fledgling tourism industry.

"All travel agents have received official memos barring them from driving tourists to remote areas unless they have received prior notification from the interior ministry," Mohammad Saleh, a travel agency boss, told AFP.

The deputy head of Yemen's tourism promotion bureau, Mohammad Mutahhar, said "precautionary measures" had been taken to prevent any more abductions.

He said police officers had also begun carrying out long-distance surveillance on convoys of tourists travelling to remote areas.

The 17 French tourists were kidnapped by tribesmen last week as they returned to Sanaa from a sight-seeing tour to eastern Maarib province, and held captive for four days in the remote village of 'Ain Hadi.

The kidnappers from the Al Aslam tribe wanted to use them as bargaining chips to secure the release of a fellow tribe member, jailed three months ago for abducting an American national.

But they were released safe and well last Monday without the government yielding to the kidnappers' demand.

"We hope this isolated incident will not affect the influx of tourists," Mr. Mutahhar said.

That might be a vain hope. Pascal Leduc, the French director of the Arabian Horizons Travel Agency in Sanaa, said a group of 50 French tourists had cancelled their March booking after hearing about their compatriots' ordeal.

"Reservations already dropped by 10 per cent," he added.

He believes the government should take action to turn the tide. "Police protection should be called for potentially perilous locations, such as the ancient ruins of Maarib or Saada," a mountainous region in the north, home to the last Yemeni Jews.

Omar Mohammad Omar, who runs the country's biggest tourism agency Al Alamiya, worried that obvious security measures may be counterproductive and scare off tourists.

"We do not ask for protection, as such a move would negatively affect tourism," he said, adding that checkpoints in remote areas would be a better way of keeping an eye on tourists.

He also said the French kidnapping had not affected his company's business. "We have 550 tourists coming from France, Britain and Italy in February.

At the Shibam agency, which organised the ill-fated French tourists' trip, bosses too were trying to play down the potential fall-out from the kidnapping incident.

"Kidnapping is recurrent. But this is the first time that such an operation has received international media attention," said Ahmad Fadel of Shibam.

The agency is expecting 10 groups from Germany, Austria and France, a total of 200 visitors, in February, he said.

Tribesmen have frequently kidnapped foreign workers and tourists to make demand on the government, such as the release of members from jail and compensation for oil projects on their land.

Some 50 foreigners have been seized in 16 separate abductions since 1992, those all were released unharmed.

The spotlight on Yemen's problem with kidnappers has come at a bad time for the country, whose tourism industry was just beginning to pick up after a May-July 1994 civil war.

Pentagon stops buying U.S.-Israeli spy planes

WASHINGTON (R) — The Pentagon has dropped plans to acquire unmanned "Hunter" spyplanes being jointly developed by Israel and the United States because of their limited capabilities, U.S. defence officials said on Friday.

Defence Secretary William Perry told CNN Television in an interview en route to Switzerland on Friday that the Hunter unmanned intelligence drone was not competitive with other programmes in either performance or in meeting U.S. needs.

The Hunter, being developed by Israel Aircraft Industries Ltd. and the American firm TRW Inc., is part of a broad $4.2 billion U.S. programme to build a whole family of new spy drones for joint use by the U.S. military services.

The Defence Department in November suspended acquisition of the Hunter based partly on a report by congressional investigators that said the U.S. navy was dissatisfied because of weight and range restrictions.

The Pentagon originally planned to purchase as many as 47 Hunters but fewer than 10 have been produced.

The Pentagon last year used "Predator" spy drones based in Albania to fly over Bosnia, gathering infra-red and other intelligence on military activity there for U.N. peacekeepers. The Predator flights are expected to resume in the coming months to aid NATO military peacekeepers in Bosnia.

A report by congressional investigators late last year recommended that the Pentagon halt acquisition of the Hunter for amphibious assault ships because of U.S. Navy objections.

The Defence Department has been looking into variants of unmanned aerial vehicles

Fund-raising brochure features Rabin assassin

TEL AVIV (AP) — A fundraising booklet for the university attended by Yitzhak Rabin's confessed assassin features the killer's photograph 12 times, Israel Television reported Friday.

The booklet, printed for a Bar Ilan University dinner scheduled to be held in New York City and organised by American donors, displays a black-and-white photograph of Yigal Amir in paid advertisements congratulating honorary degree winners.

The booklet was originally printed before Mr. Rabin was gunned down by Amir at a Nov. 4 peace rally in Tel Aviv.

But after Mr. Rabin's death, a fundraising dinner where the booklet was to be distributed was postponed, and the booklet was reprinted to include a photograph of Mr. Rabin. The photographs of Amir, who is not identified in the booklet and is apparently intended to represent a typical university student, were not removed when the booklet was reprinted.

A copy of the booklet, which also includes photographs of one other student, was obtained by Israel Television.

A spokesman for Bar Ilan University told Israel Television that the photographs had been taken a-year-and-a-half ago and the university had not seen the booklet before it was reprinted.

Bar Ilan President Shlomo Eckstein recalled the booklet after the pictures of Amir were noticed, according to the spokesman.

Mr. Rabin's widow, Leah, said in a statement to the television station that the brochure gave her "chills."

"It is very hard for me to believe that this happened only because of lack of attention and carelessness," Mrs. Rabin said.

Amir studied law and religion at Bar Ilan, where a large percentage of the student body are observant Jews. Amir is currently on trial in Tel Aviv for Mr. Rabin's murder.

U.S. denies role in Saudi arms for Bosnia

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The State Department said Friday that it had not backed Saudi Arabia's military assistance to Bosnia, in defiance of an arms embargo, but declined to say if Washington knew of the aid.

The Washington Post had reported that Saudi Arabia channelled $300 million worth of arms to the Bosnian Muslims over three years in a secret programme that enjoyed tacit U.S. cooperation.

Any arms deliveries to any of the factions in the former Yugoslavia would be in direct violation of a U.N. embargo.

State Department spokesman Glyn Davies denied "the allegations that the U.S. government was in any way involved with the reported Saudi programme to arm the Bosnian government."

"We did not cooperate, coordinate or consult with any government regarding the provision of arms to the Bosnians," he said, adding that Washington had long considered them "victims of aggression."

But he declined to say if Washington knew that Saudi Arabia had armed the Bosnian Muslims.

The U.N. arms embargo was declared on all sides of the fighting in the former Yugoslavia, but was widely considered to have hampered the Muslim-led government of landlocked Bosnia-Herzegovina the most.

U.S. ships have participated in a NATO blockade of the Adriatic, and if the U.S. government had known of the violation it would have been required to report it.

"It was always our policy to abide by the arms embargo," he said.

"In theory if we knew of any violation of the arms embargo, it would be through means that I can't discuss," he added, referring to U.S. intelligence services.

A White House spokesman also denied the claim, saying "whatever the Saudis claim to have done was not in connect with us, with our approval."

"We have not in any way coordinated, endorsed, or in any other way encouraged other countries to violate the arms embargo," the spokesman said.

The newspaper added that this aid came in addition to Saudi humanitarian aid to Bosnia, around $500 million over the past three years.

A Saudi official quoted by the Washington Post said that this Bosnian arms programme was similar to a programme set up to back Muslim rebels battling Soviet troops in Afghanistan during the 1980s. This operation was not officially supported by the United States.

But, in contrast with Afghanistan, the Saudi official said, Washington did not finance the secret arms programme for Bosnia.

"(The U.S. role) was more than just turning a blind eye to what was going on... it was consent combined with stealth cooperation.

Most of the weapons were shipped through Croatia, the Saudi official was quoted as saying. He added that emergency deliveries were made at night to Tuzla airport, or other airport under Bosnia control.

If the Saudi reports prove to be true, the United States clearly took great care to respect the principle of plausible deniability by using intermediaries such as former military staff or intelligence agents, the Washington Post said.

In an interview published this week, David Owen, the former EU negotiator for Bosnia, said he believed that Washington had probably supplied Bosnia and Croatia with arms, but that such an allegation was impossible to prove.

Asked about future arms supplies to Bosnia after NATO's Implementation Force pulls out in a year, the Saudi official said that his country was prepared to cover between 15 to 25 per cent of the cost, and that negotiations on the issue were currently underway with Washington.

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14:00 The Flintstones
14:30 Disney's Aladdin
15:00 Family Playhouse
15:30 Islamic History in Jordan
16:00 Voyagers
17:00 Doc. — Azimut
17:30 Serie — Les Compagnons De L'Adventure
18:00 Magazine — Envoye Special
9:00 News in French
19:15 Magazine — Sports Et Musique
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Are You Being Served
20:00 Doc. — Oriental Rugs
20:25 Hawai Five-0 (drama)
21:10 Cinema, Cinema
21:30 Doc. — Women of the World
22:00 News in English
22:25 Counterstrike
23:15 . The American Chart Show
23:59 Series — Stay Lucky

PRAYER TIMES

05:05 Fajr
06:24 (Sunrise) Duha
11:49 Dhuhr
14:49 'Asr
17:15 Maghreb
18:34 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman
Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Showers are expected in the eastern areas of the Kingdom with skies partly cloudy and winds southeasterly moderate. Temperatures are expected to rise gradually effective Monday.

In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate to active and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman	4 / 12
Aqaba	10 / 20
Deserts	2/ 14
Jordan Valley	8 / 18

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 12, Aqaba 19 Humidity readings: Amman 75 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhles Halasah 819220
Dr. Bassam Karadsheh 759200
Dr. Munther Al Qraini 779959
Dr. Abdul Wahab Awad ... 846070
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairouih pharmacy 623672
Najih pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Ounu 281741
Alquds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Randa Shahin 995170
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192. 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/332
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 6442811/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Ammun Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 687071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen ... 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital ... 612240/50
Amal Hospital 687155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)980560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990090
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865194
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital .. (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:30 Bangkok (RJ)
07:20 Aqaba (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
07:20 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
08:55 Larnaca (RJ)
09:20 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:55 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:00 Brussels, Paris (RJ)
17:00 Brussels, Paris (RJ)
17:45 London (RJ)
18:00 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:25 Athens (RJ)
18:45 Frankfurt (RJ)
19:00 Salzburg (add) (RJ)
19:35 Rome (RJ)
19:40 Vienna (RJ)
00:10 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)
10:30 Sanaa (IY)
10:40 Shariqah, Bahrain (GF)
14:00 Doha (Q7)
14:30 Moscow (SU)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
20:20 Cairo (MS)
23:10 Istanbul (TK)
23:59 London, Beirut (BA)
01:25 Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:00 Aqaba (RJ)
06:15 Beirut (RJ)
08:50 Frankfurt (RJ)
10:00 Salzburg (add) (RJ)
11:00 Vienna (RJ)
11:15 Rome (RJ)
11:25 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15 Athens (RJ)
20:10 Cairo (RJ)
20:20 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
20:25 New Delhi (RJ)
20:35 Jeddah (RJ)
20:45 Damascus (RJ)
22:05 Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
22:40 Bangkok (RJ)
22:45 Sanaa (RJ)

Other flights (Terminal 2)
07:45 Beirut (ME)
11:30 Sanaa (IY)
11:30 Doha (GF)
15:00 Doha (Q7)
16:05 Moscow (SU)
21:10 Cairo (MS)
02:25 Amsterdam (KL)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/ 500
Banana	630/630
Banana (Mukammar)	560/560
Banana (imported)	800/600
Cabbage	70 / 50
Carrot	200/120
Cauliflower	150/100
Cucumbers (large)	200/ 120
Cucumbers (small)	370 / 260
Eggplant	200/ 120
Garlic	1000/800
Grape Fruit	200/120
Lemon	330/220
Marrow (large)	150/ 100
Marrow (small)	280 / 200
Onion (green)	140/100
Onion (dry)	220/ 150
Orange	600/450
Pepper (hot)	500 / 400
Pepper (sweet)	500/400
Potato	200/140
Radish	170/100
String Beans	700 / 500
Spanish	180 / 120
Tomato	140/90



KING HOSTS IFTAR: His Majesty King Hussein Saturday hosts in the presence of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan an iftar banquet in honour of representatives of Irbid and Ajloun governorates. The banquet was attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, His Royal Highness Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, the King's military secretary, the King's Private Chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayef, His Royal Highness Prince Firas Ben Raad, the King's Advisor and Chief Islamic Justice Sheikh Izzeddin Tamimi, the King's Advisor on Military Affairs Sharif Fawwaz Zaben and the governors of Irbid and Ajloun. The King and the guests performed Al Maghreb prayers together (Petra photo)

Ministry prepares for Mecca pilgrimage

AMMAN (Petra) — Only those Jordanians born in 1938 and earlier will be able to perform this year's pilgrimage to Mecca towards the end of April.

Addressing a press conference Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi said among those eligible, priority will be given to Muslims performing the pilgrimage for the first time. Dr. Abbadi said the ministry has so far registered 16,000 worshippers for this year's pilgrimage.

The minister said women, usually accompanied by males other than their husbands, have also been registered for the pilgrimage.

The minister said the round-trip cost for bus transportation to Mecca and Medina is JD 125.

Cargo transport starts from Aqaba to Eilat – official

AQABA (Petra) — The Aqaba Ports Corporation (APC) started transporting Israel-destined cargo from Aqaba to Eilat by trailers shuttling between the two ports, APC Director General Dureid Mahasneh announced Saturday.

Dr. Mahasneh said the transport of all kinds of cargo arriving at Aqaba and destined for Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas is under arrangement. He added that it is hoped that Aqaba will become a transit point for inland traffic.

Jordan's transport agreements with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel allow for direct overland transit activities between Jordan and the other two parties, said Dr. Mahasneh.

Meanwhile Minister of Transport Samir Kawar was quoted by Reuter as saying that the port of Aqaba will handle goods from the Far East and areas east of the Suez Canal bound for Palestinian lands and Israel.



Dureid Mahasneh

Mr. Kawar said Jordan has been working to raise the efficiency of its only port and restructuring prices to lower its service rates which would allow it to compete with other ports in the region.

In addition, Dr. Mahasneh said APC is negotiating with Egyptian authorities to start a maritime transport route directly linking Aqaba with the Suez Canal ports of Port Said and Dumyat.

The two sides are aiming at an greement to reduce tolls charged by the Suez Canal Authority on cargo passing through the canal and heading to or coming from Aqaba, Dr. Mahasneh added.

He said the APC, in cooperation with the Japanese government, has conducted a comprehensive study for promoting the port's services until the year 2000 taking into consideration expected increases in traffic and transit activities.

The Japan-funded plan, said Dr. Mahasneh, seeks to expand port activity and the operations of the free zone, eventually raising the port's annual capacity to 36 million tonnes, up from 30 million.

He said the APC's 1995 revenues were $5.5 million, up by 13.5 per cent over 1994.

Statistics on 'minorities' – a guessing game

(Continued from page 12)

Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin, would not be in the interest of the country. Dr. Alawin told the press last week that the number of Jordanians of Palestinian origin would not be dealt with at all "because this issue can never be made final."

Jordan has absorbed a significantly large number of Palestinians over the past 48 years, most notably after the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967.

According to the 1994 census, around 200,000 Jordanian nationals, presumed by most to be of Palestinian origin, have returned to Jordan from Gulf countries following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Many Palestinians and Syrians also came to settle in Jordan, most notably in Salt, prior to 1948. However, for all intents and purposes these people have been considered East Bank Jordanians (i.e. East Bank of the River Jordan).

According to data collected by the Jordan Times from community sources, other ethnic minorities in Jordan number as follows:

— Jordanian Armenians number approximately 3500 (0.08 per cent), according to Vahan Topalian, the bishop of Jordan.

Bishop Topalian added that there were an additional 2,000 Armenians living in Jordan, most of them from Iraq, who do not have Jordanian citizenship.

— Jordanian Chechens do not exceed 15,000 (0.3 per cent) according to most sources contacted by the Jordan Times. However, Yousef Bilto, treasurer of the Society for the Friends of the Republic of Chechenya, maintained that the figure is between 30,000 and 50,000 (0.7 per cent to 1.2 per cent).

— Jordanian Circassians number 60,000 to 70,000 (1.5 per cent- 1.7 per cent) according to a senior source in the Circassian community who requested anonymity.

— Jordanian Kurds number around 7,000 (0.17 per cent), according to Abdul Munim Al Kurdi, president of the Salah Eddin Ayoubi Society.

— Jordanian Druze number approximately 10,000 to 12,000 (0.2 per cent - 0.3 per cent), according to Taysir Abu Hamdan, author of "The Druze — Beliefs and Social Conduct." However, Mr. Abu Hamdan stressed that the Druze community should not be regarded as a minority as they are Muslim Arabs.

The percentage of minorities in Jordan, especially in relation to Christians, Chechens and Circassians, is currently of significance as the government is proposing a new election law, raising the number of deputies in the next (13th) parliament to 100 or 102 from the present 80.

According to the government proposal, Christians will have two extra seats, raising the number from nine in the current parliament to 11.

Circassians and Chechens will obtain an extra seat, giving them a total of four.

Jordan, PNA seek to advance trade ties

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb and Palestinian Minister of Finance Mohammad Nashashibi Saturday announced that Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) have agreed to intensify trade talks over the next few weeks.

Mr. Abul Ragheb said the meetings are needed to discuss bilateral ties and the effect of economic developments on their relations at the regional level in order to advance such relations and build an effective, integrated economic relationship between the two sides, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The agency said the two ministers discussed measures to stimulate trade and the implementation of the bilateral agreements they have signed so far.

Chargé d'Affaire of Palestinian embassy in Jordan Omar Khatib was earlier quoted as saying that the PNA was satisfied with the level of coordination between the two sides.

New airline launches Amman-Aqaba shuttles; fare raised to JD 50 round-trip

By P. V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Royal Wings, Jordan's new airline designed to operate short-haul flights, will launch shuttle services between Amman and Aqaba beginning Feb. 10 and is also planning to operate an Amman-Tel Aviv service starting in about two months.

Ahmad Quntar, general manager of Royal Wings, said the airline would operate a Canadian-built De Havilland Dash-8-300 plane with a 50-seat capacity for the twice daily Amman-Aqaba flights.

Amman's old airport at Marka will be the base of operations for the airline, which has been formed with a eye on the increasing tourism traffic involving Jordan.

Aqaba-Amman tickets will cost JD 25 one-way and JD 40 for round-trip if the return flight is on the same day, Mr. Quntar told the Jordan Times.

Royal Jordanian, the Kingdom's flag carrier, now operates on the same route. RJ fares will remain JD 18 for an Amman-Aqaba round-trip until Feb. 10. When Royal Wings takes over these flights regular round-trip airfare (not returning the same day) will be raised to JD 50, RJ ticketing officials said.

For the moment RJ fully owns Royal Wings, which will be formally established and will operate as an independent entity after formalities are completed, RJ officials said.

The new Amman-Aqaba flights will be operated in close coordination with RJ, the officials said.

"There will not be any conflict of interest," commented an RJ official adding that RJ plans would continue to fly large groups to and from Aqaba out of the Queen Alia International Airport.

RJ flights to Aqaba and back operate out of the Queen Alia International Airport, about 30 kilometres south of Amman. For Amman residents, Royal Wings flights out of Marka would mean cutting about 30 minutes of driving both ways.

Mr. Quntar said Royal Wings hopes to acquire another Dash-8-300 turboprop plane early next year and to eventually introduce shuttle flights to and from Damascus, Baghdad and other Arab capitals in the region.

"We have to closely study the supply and demand situation before launching such flights," said Mr. Quntar.

The capital and equity participation of Royal Wings have not yet been finalised, but the airline will start the Amman-Aqaba flights as scheduled on Feb. 10 under an arrangement with Arab Wings, Jordan's first charter carrier.

Mr. Quntar said Royal Wings would offer 45 job opportunities in the initial stage before expanding operations.

An RJ-Royal Wings team is expected to visit Tel Aviv on Monday for negotiations with Israel's Arkia airline on operating Amman-Tel Aviv flights.

Mr. Quntar said Royal Wings was expecting to operate five flights every week between Amman and Tel Aviv under reciprocal arrangements with Arkia.

The flights could start by April, cutting down travel time between Amman and Tel Aviv to around 20 minutes from the present several-hour overland trip across the northern and southern border openings between Jordan and Israel.

"The fare (for Amman-Tel Aviv flights) has to be negotiated with Arkia," said Mr. Quntar.

Arkia is one of Israel's prominent private-owned airlines operating short-haul routes, including Tel Aviv-Eilat flights. According to Israeli sources, Arkia is ready to launch Amman flights as soon as it reaches an agreement with Royal Wings.

The Ministry of Transport said last week that it was waiting for a Royal Decree to be issued endorsing the transport agreement signed between Jordan and Israel on Jan. 16 before giving the green light to transport companies to launch direct overland bus and taxi services between the two countries.

Under the agreement, such services, including air flights as stipulated in an annex on civil aviation, could start in 30 to 45 days from the day the Royal Decree is issued approving the accord.

Islamists likely to withhold confidence

(Continued from page 1)

"mind" the participation of independent Islamists in the new government but that they "hoped there will be positive response" by the government to safeguarding public freedoms.

In response to the IAF leaders' queries over the proposed election law, which has been severely criticised by many politicians, intellectuals and columnists, Mr. Kabariti promised to introduce a new law that ensures a fair representation for all Jordanians, Dr. Farhan said. Mr. Kabariti showed understanding to all of the front's demands, especially vis-a-vis public liberties, he added.

"The government should pay greater attention to giving more freedoms to professional associations, activating the rule of law, solving the problem of unemployment, and, most of all, alleviating its campaigns against political parties," Dr. Farhan said.

"If you are asking me about our major concern, it is that about fair and free parliamentary elections (which are scheduled to be held in 1997)," Dr. Farhan said. In brief, Dr. Farhan said, the front "is interested in a strong and clean government that will fight corruption."

Dr. Farhan did not say whether his group would vote for or against Mr. Kabariti's government in the Lower House of Parliament, or raise the possibility of abstaining but IAF Deputy Bassam Emoush (Zarqa) told the Jordan Times yesterday that his 16-member bloc is likely to deny Mr. Kabariti the vote of confidence. He, however, insisted that cooperation between the new government and the Islamists will be enhanced. "Most probably we will withhold confidence from the government," Dr. Emoush said. He did not explain why.

"It all depends on the final make-up of the government. Although we are all keen on preserving the country's interests," Dr. Emoush said. "(Mr. Kabariti) showed readiness to cooperate and we respect that."

Peres hints at early election

(Continued from page 1)

"It had a certain sentimental flavour, as we were talking in exactly the same room where we met two years ago," he said. "At that time the situation was rather precarious. The room looked different."

Asked to sum up the tone of his talks, he said: "A fair climate exists between us."

But in a sign of the disagreement which will exist between them, he dismissed Palestinian claims on East Jerusalem — which were reasserted by Mr. Arafat during the day — were a "dream."

"He has the right to have his own dreams. For dreams you need only one party. For an agreement you have to have two parties."

The Palestinian leader had earlier spoken to business leaders of his plans to host a meeting of the World Economic Forum in "the Holy City of Jerusalem."

Tourism should be spread year-round; Jordan could emerge as centre for international conferences, says minister

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The solution to the see-sawing occupancy rate at Jordan's hotels rests mainly through spreading tourism around the year and attracting regional and international conferences to be held in the Kingdom, according to Minister of Tourism Abdul Ilah Khatib.

It is only during peak tourism seasons — mid-March to end of May and mid-September to end of November — that Jordanian hotels find it difficult to meet the demand for rooms while they have enough vacancies during the off-peak seasons, the minister said.

During the peak seasons, "we realise that we need to increase our hotel capacity," said Mr. Khatib in an interview with the Jordan Times. As such, "the challenge before our private sector is to work for spreading the traffic throughout the year."

"Our weather allows for tourism round the year," said the minister. "It should not be an obstacle at all."

Upgrading Jordan's status as a regional conference centre "is an area where we really need to work very closely," he said, adding that the government was drafting plans to build a conference and exhibition complex in Amman and another in Aqaba.

But the private sector will have to come up with financing for the projects, since "we believe that the government should not invest in any such facility, and it is totally up to the private sector to invest in such projects."

Mr. Khatib said the total number of tourists coming to Jordan in 1995 were 1,073,000, representing a 25 per cent increase over 1994. The number does not include transit visitors, those who pass through Jordan to Syria or Iraq or any other neighbouring country.

The minister said it was difficult to set a definite figure as to the country's tourism revenues but said the 1995 figure mentioned during budget discussions in Parliament was $723 million.

Industry experts say the actual tourism revenues of the country during the year were around $800 million, including money spent by people who do not belong to the strictly tourism category.



Abdul Ilah Khatib

Mr. Khatib said tourism "has started to emerge as a leading economic sector" of Jordan in the wake of the signing of the peace agreement between the Kingdom and Israel in October 1994.

"We hope it will develop, and sustainable development is achieved, a development that takes care of creating more jobs for Jordanians and creating foreign exchange earnings for the country," the minister said.

At the same time, the authorities are seeking to ensure that "we can preserve our archaeological and natural wealth as far as the environment and potential of our sites are concerned."

However, the number of tourists visiting Jordan "has not reached a point where we should be really scared" of damage to the environment, said Mr. Khatib.

"We are now getting to a normal situation where, we hope, we will reach a certain level of tourist flows where we can efficiently manage our sites in a way that takes care of the preservation," he said. "Tourism, by definition, means consumption, and we have to be very careful about the preservation and maintenance of our sites.

"We need to adhere to the carrying capacity of the sites, particularly the sensitive ones such as Petra for instance, like Jerash, like Wadi Rum and some other sites which are environmentally and naturally sensitive. We need to care about the number of visitors allowed into these sites on a daily basis."

Regional competition in the tourism sector need not be seen as bad for any individual country, according to the minister, since competition "will shape up the performance of the people in the industry."

Mr. Khatib described as highly successful the joint tourism packages offered by the airlines of Jordan and Israel, Royal Jordanian and El Al, to American tourists. "We will continue it and will also offer similar packages to other markets," he said.

Under the joint packages, American tourists could fly to an Israeli airport aboard El Al, spend some time in Israel and then visit Jordan before flying out of a Jordanian airport aboard Royal Jordanian.

The minister said there was "strong international interest" in investing in Jordan's tourism industry, mainly visible in the hotel sector. As an example he cited the four hotel projects on the Dead Sea shore involving Jordanian firms with American, Swiss, French and German partners.

In addition, he said, international chains such as Hilton, Sheraton, Hyatt, Holiday Inn and Accor were also involved in hotel projects in Jordan.

The ministry has received some proposals from Arab investors to set up transport companies, but "I have not yet seen concrete projects yet," he said.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

*Paintings exhibition "A Moment of Dream" by Amer Bani Yassin at the Housing Bank Complex (until Feb. 5)

* Printmaking and paintings by Jordanian artist Yasser Dweik at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Luweibdeh. Also displaying paintings and sculptures by contemporary artists (until Feb. 18).

* Plastic (abstract) art exhibition by Jordanian and Iraqi artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina (until Feb. 6).

* Paintings by Amer Bani Yassin — "A Moment of Dream" at the Housing Bank Complex (until Feb. 5).

Mutinying Guinean troops shell presidential palace

CONAKRY (R) — Mutinous soldiers in Guinea repeatedly bombarded President Lansana Conte's palace Saturday as a pay dispute turned into a coup attempt.

Mr. Conte told French radio that loyal troops had repulsed three attacks on his palace by besieging rebels during the night but he remained in control. Shelling was kept up during the morning.

Shell fire set the palace ablaze Friday night and hospital sources put the death toll in the fighting at more than 20, mostly civilians, with dozens of wounded.

"For the moment, until now I have the power that the people granted me," Mr. Conte, who seized power in a 1984 army coup and won disputed elections in 1993, told Radio France International.

The rebels controlled the deserted centre of the mainly Muslim west African country's capital Conakry Saturday, witnesses said. Several shops were looted.

Diplomats reported the sound of gunfire from the airport, which was closed. state radio played military music.

At least 12 people were killed Friday when a tank fired a shell into a crowd close to the presidential palace.

On Friday, Mr. Conte met the mutineers' demand that he sack Defence Minister Lieutenant-Colonel Abdourahmane Diallo, a close associate, and promised their demands for more pay would be met.

Mr. Conte himself appealed to the mutineers Friday to return to their barracks. "I have been informed that there are some soldiers who are disrupting the situation in the country by trying to seize power," he told state radio.

"As far as your demands for wages and supplies are concerned, you will be satisfied by Monday. As for those who want to take power, leave them to me, they will see," he added.

Aid workers said foreign residents had taken refuge in embassy compounds.

The revolt was west Africa's third in three weeks.

In Niger last Saturday, the armed forces chief overthrew civilian President Mahamane Ousmane, saying a political power struggle that had virtually paralysed government threatened chaos. Six soldiers died in the fighting.

In Sierra Leone on Jan. 16, military leader Captain Valentine Strasser was toppled by his deputy, Brigadier Julius Maada Bio, in a peaceful palace coup.

Guinea, a bauxite producer with a wealth of unexploited minerals and precious stones under its soil, is currently observing the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

Its parliament has heard calls from both the opposition and the presidential majority for something to be done to improve the lot of the poorly paid soldiers. Civil servants received an 18 per cent pay rise in January, but the army did not.

Mr. Conte seized power in the volatile, impoverished country in an army coup in 1984, after the death of Marxist leader Ahmed Sekou Toure, who ruled from independence from France in 1958.

Scores of people were killed during campaigning for a December 1993 presidential election which returned Mr. Conte to power amid opposition charges of massive fraud. Parliamentary elections in June 1995 passed off more peacefully and the country had been relatively calm, since then.

China threat spurs Asian arms race

TOKYO (AFP) — The threat of China's military build up has spurred other Asian countries, from Indonesia to Japan, to rearm at a rate not seen since the cold war, analysts here say.

"A major reason (for the arms build up) is that many of these Asian countries have become richer and now have money to buy weapons," said Masashi Nishihara, chief researcher at Japan's National Institute for Defence Studies.

"But another big reason is China's perceived military build up which is worrying. China is seen as a growing threat," Mr. Nishihara added.

Regional arms purchases have not yet reached an alarming level, analysts say.

But they point out that many Asian countries are actively acquiring sophisticated military hardware, in stark contrast to most Western countries, which generally have been slashing military budgets since the end of the cold war.

Singapore increased its military expenditure 91 per cent from 1985 to 1994 in real terms, while South Korea boosted spending 59 per cent over the same period and Japan's defence budget was up 58 per cent.

The Philippines increased spending 37 per cent over the period, while Thailand's was up 35 per cent and Taiwan's 31 per cent, according to international studies.

The threat of China in the regional balance of power materialised last year in the Spratly Islands when territorial markers put up by the Chinese Navy on a disputed shoal were blown up by the Philippines.

The Spratlys, which are believed to sit atop large oil deposits, are also claimed in whole or in part by Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Chinese activity near the islands was "a big shock for ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) as well as for other countries, including Japan," a Japanese diplomat said.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Tensions between China and Taiwan have contributed to a sense of instability in Asia, particularly since Beijing has repeatedly said that it does not rule out using force against the Taipei government if it declared independence from the mainland or in the case of foreign interference.

China's armed forces suffer from a high level of obsolete equipment despite declared annual defence spending increases around 20 per cent, albeit amid high inflation.

But analysts said real defence spending by China was difficult to estimate due to a lack of transparency in accounts and a modernisation drive within the navy and the air force.

China has bought state-of-the art weapons from Russia, including powerful Sukhoi-27 fighter planes which it reportedly plans to assemble itself later.

The current military build-up in Asia began in the mid 1980s, amid tension triggered by the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and with the former Soviet Union then still wielding mighty influence in the region.

Both of these threats have disappeared and China now seems to have taken the role of potential threat to regional security.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Winston Lord said last week in Manila that the mainland Chinese were "clearly building up their capability for the Taiwan Strait, for the South China Sea."

The Japanese government has made regular official requests to Beijing for greater transparency of its military programme.

Defence analysts said that the regional military buildup is also fuelled by competition for prestige among ASEAN members and by a market which rewards purchasers — including political leaders — with hefty commissions for large contracts.

Maccanico resumes talks on new Italian government

ROME (R) — Prime Minister-Designate Antonio Maccanico resumed talks with parties Saturday on forming a new government as ex-Premier Silvio Berlusconi denied reports that he wanted a "political" rather than "technocrat" cabinet.

Mr. Maccanico, a 71-year-old master political fixer, was appointed by President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro Thursday to try to end the crisis that has gripped Italy since technocrat Prime Minister Lamberto Dini's government resigned on Jan. 11.

He has made broad backing, as well as a cross-party deal to pursue a drive to rewrite the constitution to ensure stability, the conditions for forming Italy's 55th post-war government.

Mr. Maccanico said Friday, his first day of talks, that he had found common ground among parties for an accord.

But newspapers reported Saturday that the main blocs — Berlusconi's centre-right Freedom Alliance and the centre-left Olive Tree — were divided over the nature of the new cabinet.

They said that Mr. Berlusconi and his main ally, far-right leader Gianfranco Fini, wanted a "political" cabinet with ministers from the parties as opposed to the centre-left's preference for a purely "technocrat" government like Mr. Dini's.

But Mr. Berlusconi dimissed the reports, saying: "I have no idea where this ghost came from. We are here to talk about the main point, which is reform.

Mr. Maccanico, essentially a technocrat who has served as a behind-the-scenes power-broker and minister of institutional reforms, is due to continue his talks Sunday, to be followed by a second round on the make-up of the government.

His chances of success have been boosted by signs of consensus between the rival blocs on the need for parliament to revise the constitution to achieve the political stability that has long eluded Italy.

After meeting Mr. Maccanico Saturday, Senator Francesco Tabladini said his federalist Northern League would "wait and see" on deciding whether to support the government but added:

"There is a general fear of elections, and this could have an influence on the chances of forming a new government."

Poll shows bigger lead for Spain's PP

MADRID (R) — Spain's centre-right Popular Party (PP) is widening its electoral lead over the ruling Socialists ahead of a March 3 general election, according to a public opinion poll published Saturday.

The poll, in the Catalan regional newspaper El Periodico, gave the PP 42.5 per cent of the vote, 11 points more than the embattled governing party with 31.8 per cent.

It showed the Communist-led United Left (IU) with 12 per cent and the Catalan Coalition with 4.4 per cent.

The survey, conducted by Vox Publica on Jan. 30 and 31, asked 2,028 registered voters which party they were going to vote for in the upcoming election.

Two earlier polls, one done by the government's Statistics Bureau and one published in an anti-government newspaper, put the PP ahead by 6.9 points and 10 points respectively.

Most Spaniards, no matter how they plan to vote, believe the PP will unseat the Socialists after 13 years in power, the poll showed.

PP leader Jose Maria Aznar has been pushing his Conservative Party to the political centre to capture votes from a growing part of the population that has tired of the scandals and corruption that taint the Socialists.

In June 1993, the last general election, the Socialists took 38.7 per cent of the vote and the PP had 34.8, while the IU got 9.6 per cent and the Catalans had 4.9.

Possible witness in Samper drug probe shot dead in Colombia

BOGOTA (R) — The wife of an alleged Colombian drug trafficker who officials said could have been a key witness in the snowballing drug probe of President Ernesto Samper has been found shot dead, police said Friday.

They said the body of Elizabeth Montoya De Sarria was found in an apartment in the capital Thursday, riddled with a dozen gunshot wounds in a gangland-style slaying.

A shadowy group calling itself "Dignity For Colombia", which in the past has issued demands that Mr. Samper step down because of charges his campaign used drug money, claimed responsibility for the killing.

Mrs. Montoya's body, identified by forensic experts, was found after witnesses called police to report a shooting and a burst of gunfire on the street.

It was found alongside the body of Humberto Vargas Rojas, Mrs. Montoya's apparent companion or bodyguard.

A report from city police said Mr. Vargas had been shot six times in the head and once in the face.

Mrs. Montoya, 46, had been summoned by the prosecutor-general's office to testify as part of the investigation into alleged Cali cartel funding of Mr. Samper's campaign.

Described by a source close to Prosecutor-General Alfonso Valdivieso as a potentially key witness, she had recently dropped out of sight and never responded to the summons.

A group calling itself "Dignity For Colombia" claimed responsibility for the killing in a telephone call to a Bogota-based television news programme.

A spokesman for the programme, who asked that it not be identified by name, told Reuters a caller speaking in the name of the group warned that Mr. Valdivieso and Police Chief General Rosso Jose Serrano could be among its next victims.



President Bill Clinton gestures while delivering a speech on education and the future as he campaigns in Concord, New Hampshire friday. Mr. Clinton, who faces no serious opposition for the Democratic presidential nomination, is nonetheless campaigning in New Hampshire as a large field of Republicans compete for the Republican nomination (Reuter photo)

Clinton: U.S. headed in right direction

SALEM, N.H. (R) — President Bill Clinton, unchallenged in the New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary but unwilling to give the political pulpit to Republicans, Friday said the nation was moving "in the right direction" and vowed to do more if re-elected.

In New Hampshire appearances, the Democratic president avoided the strident rhetoric of the Republicans battling to challenge him and instead stressed improvements in the economy and reductions in the crime and welfare rates since his election in 1992.

"I say to you, as you look ahead, the issue is what should we do now," he told an enthusiastic crowd packed into the Salem High School Gymnasium.

"I would argue we should build on the successes of the last three years," he said, "and keep going in the right direction until we have dealt with these problems in an adequate fashion, until we have seized our opportunities."

Mr. Clinton Saturday concludes a two-day trip to New Hampshire, a state known for its demanding primary process — one that has ended the budding political dreams of some and given new life to those of others, including his own.

"Every four years, this state performs a very valuable function for the rest of the country," Mr. Clinton said in Concord, where he shook countless hands, posed for pictures and patiently worked friendly crowds.

"In the New Hampshire primary system you have the opportunity to ... hold people who would seek the nation's highest office accountable to the citizens who are ultimately in control of our destiny."

In Nashua, Mr. Clinton took part in a round-table discussion that stressed the need to obtain the education needed to face the technological demands of the emerging workplace — something Mr. Clinton has pushed since entering the White House.

Mr. Clinton's visit to the snow-covered state, which holds the nation's first primary on Feb. 20, was in sharp contrast to the battle he faced four years ago, when he was fighting for his political life after allegations of marital infidelity.

His second-place finish in that contest was enough to stabilise his faltering campaign and put him on the road to the Democratic nomination and, ultimately, the White House.

This time around, he faces no serious challengers for his party's nomination, only the sniping of nine Republican candidates vying to square off against him in the November election.

Mr. Clinton, who will not formally announce his candidacy for a second term until the spring, came to New Hampshire to counter their attacks on him.

Throughout his daylong appearances, Mr. Clinton raised such issues as the educational challenges facing young Americans and efforts to protect the environment, but made no direct mention of flat taxes, the topic dominating the Republican debate.

Millionaire publisher Steve Forbes has skyrocketed from political obscurity and become a threat to the front-runner status of Senate majority leader Bob Dole by advocating a simple flat tax to replace the complex U.S. tax codes.

Mr. Clinton, while not rejecting the idea of a single tax rate for all, has said he has not seen any proposal that would successfully abolish the budget deficit while providing adequate funding for vital programmes.

The president repeatedly pointed to improvements in the economy since he was elected in 1992, reminding voters that he had not ignored his old campaign vow to work on fixing the nation's troubled economy. The White House, to reinforce the claim, issued a release noting that the unemployment rate in New Hampshire, 7.6 percent in 1992, has fallen to 3.2 per cent.

Forbes under attack

Meanwhile Mr. Forbes, the political novice whose scathing TV ads have made him a leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination, became the chief target Friday of his rivals, who allege he is not a true conservative.

The millionaire publisher said at a campaign stop he must "confess" one charge against him was true: Yes, he did err and support a liberal plan for national health care in 1973, but he said it was a youthful "mistake."

Attacks on Mr. Forbes, considered a long-shot just months ago until his TV attacks on opponents and advocacy of a simple income tax system gained him national attention, dramatised the fact that he is now the hottest item on the Republican presidential campaign trail.

Major newspapers delved into his wealthy background and national television programmes featured him in a way that moved him from a political novelty to a serious contender.

Enthusiastic crowds and a large contingent of reporters followed the heir to the Forbes family publishing fortune. Rivals tried to knock him from his second place in polls behind the leader, Senate majority leader Bob Dole.

Campaigning in this frigid farm state, which holds presidential preference voting caucuses on Feb. 12, one rival, Texas Sen. Phil Gramm, told hospital workers Mr. Forbes was not the conservative he claims to be in a party where conservatives dominate the presidential nomination process.

Sen. Gramm called Mr. Forbes a "moderate Republican" in the mode of the late Nelson Rockefeller, also a multi-millionaire whose liberal policies were despised by conservatives. He gave as an example columns Mr. Forbes wrote in 1973 for the business magazine bearing the family name that supported the sweeping national health care plan of Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy, held up as the Senate's most liberal voice.

Mr. Forbes, 48, asked about the Gramm charge on a radio talk show, readily admitted he backed the Kennedy plan.

"In terms of the Teddy Kennedy health plan, when I was 25 years old, I will confess that I endorsed it," he told a radio caller. "But unlike some in public life, I changed my mind very quickly, I realised very quickly that that would be a disaster. And so for the last 20 years I have been fighting government encroachments on health care.

"So, yes, one time, when I was fresh out of college, I did but I changed my mind," he continued. "And I'm free to admit it unlike the Washington politicians — they never tried to admit they've ever made a mistake — I did on that one."

But Sen. Gramm said "this is not an isolated incident — this is a case where Steve Forbes has over 20 years written editorials that reflect his record just as votes in the House and Senate represent my record and just as votes in the Senate and House represent Bob Dole's record."

Other presidential candidates have also been taking pot shots at Mr. Forbes, including former Tennesse Gov. Lamar Alexander, who calls Mr. Forbes' flat tax plan "nutty," and Sen. Dole, who has said Mr. Forbes is untested and has "risky" ideas.



Senate Republican leader Bob Dole (left) and millionaire publisher Steve Forbes remained locked in a close race in the crucial first-in-the-nation primary state of New Hampshire. New Hampshire Republicans vote for their presidential nominee to face President Bill Clinton on Feb. 20 (Reuter photo)

Boys held on Internet-inspired bomb plot

NEW YORK (R) — Three 13-year-old boys have been accused of plotting to blow up their school after learning how to build a bomb over the Internet. The boys were arrested after other students at Pine Grove Junior High School in Minoa, New York, heard rumours of their plans and police were alerted, said Capt. William Bleyle of the nearby Manlius Police Department. The boys planned to break into the school and plant a homemade fertiliser bomb in the office, he said. One of the boys admitted they learned how to build the bomb from instructions on the Internet, the global computer network.

Briton walks his way into a job in France

LONDON (R) — An unemployed gardener who walked 250 kilometres to London for an interview after social security officials refused to pay his bus fare has been rewarded with a job at a hotel in Corsica. Chris Owen's trek from Cumbran in Wales hit the headlines after the opposition Labour Party took up the 26-year-old's case in parliament and accused Prime Minister John Major's government of being uncaring. His social security office had refused to pay the £11 ($16.72) bus fare for the French job interview under a scheme designed to help the unemployed travel to find work.

Finger licking good meal for quick cat

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand (AFP) — A very quick cat sparked a bizarre police search after its owner found it was chewing on a finger, the Christchurch Press newspaper reported here. Quoting an unnamed police official, the newspaper said the cat's owner noticed her cat chewing away on something and on closer inspection discovered it was a finger. She telephoned the police who took the matter in hand, so to speak, and set out to finger the digit-less owner. The press said they went door-to-door in the city suburb of Rangiora to find the owner of the appendage. About an hour later, and several doors down from the cat's home, a man was found in his backyard working away with a heavily bandaged hand. He admitted having lost his finger after cutting it off in a bandsaw two days earlier. The cat apparently was quick to pounce.

Stephen Fry takes on film role as Oscar Wilde

LONDON (R) — Fey British actor Stephen Fry, who last year fled from a stage role after bad reviews, said Wednesday he would star in a film about the gay 19th-century writer Oscar Wilde. Fry will play Wilde, a famed wit and dandy, who was imprisoned for two years in 1895 for homosexual offences. The Irish-born playwright's social standing never recovered and he died in exile in France in 1900, but his novels and plays remain extremely popular. "It is a part I have hoped to play for many years," Fry, who describes himself as a celibate, said in a statement. Fry is best known for his role as the butler Jeeves in the British television series Jeeves And Wooster based on novels by P.G. Wodehouse. He fled to Belgium last February after critics panned his performance in the play Cell Mates at a London theatre. He was missing for three days before he contacted his agent saying he was a "silly old fool" suffering from stagefright.



Actor and dancer Gene Kelly died February 2 at the age of 83. Kelly is shown in his most famous scene from the 1952 film Singin' In The Rain (Reuter photo)

Reagans and Hollywood mourn death of film legend Gene Kelly

LOS ANGELES (R) — Hollywood Saturday mourned the death of film legend Gene Kelly, who put blue collar into the black tie genre of song and dance movies, the day after the cinema giant died peacefully in his sleep.

"Hey, who else do you know who parlayed an umbrella and wet loafers into the greatest movie moment of all time," Bob Hope said in a tribute to his longtime friend, referring to possibly Kelly's most famous film, Singin' In The Rain.

Former first lady Nancy Reagan, who in her years as an actress worked with Kelly as a contract artist at MGM in Hollywood's early days, said, "Gene Kelly was a friend to Ronnie and me for many years. We go back a long way to our treasured days at MGM, where Gene and I were privileged to be part of that special studio family.

"Gene will forever be remembered as a true genius of entertainment. There wasn't anything he couldn't do and do well. He made you believe that Hollywood really was a magic place.

"Ronnie and I enjoyed every movie Gene made, but one of our all-time favourites has to be An American In Paris. The song, Our Love Is Here To Stay, has always had special meaning to us — we've sung it at our anniversary celebrations for years.

"We will miss Gene, as will his admirers around the world and all who loved him. Our hearts go out to his wife, Patricia, and his family."

Younger stars, as well as Kelly's contemporaries, also paid tribute. Pop superstar Michael Jackson, who modelled many of Kelly's steps from the 1940s and '50s into his own unique style of dancing in concerts and videotapers, said, "Gene Kelly was a superb dancer, singer, choreographer, actor, director and gentleman. He is and will always remain an inspiration."

Kelly, also remembered for a number of classic films, died in his sleep Friday morning at age 83 with his third wife Patricia by his bedside at his home in Beverly Hills. His publicist, Warren Cowan, said the star succumbed to complications from two previous strokes.

"He was active and enjoyed it and is going to be terribly missed — one of the last of the legends," said Mr. Cowan.

Kelly's agent and longtime friend, Mort Viner, said: "His final days were constantly downhill with health problems.

Hope, a veteran entertainer, remembered Kelly not only for his dancing but for his varied skills. "His style, technique and innovation changed the world of dance in American films.

"What a talent. A dance instructor and a chorus boy with a degree in economics who gave more talent to the big screen than almost anyone I know," said Hope in a reference to Kelly's early life before he became a Hollywood legend.

Kelly's 1952 Singin' In The Rain which he co-directed, contains one of Hollywood's most enduring images, as Kelly sings and dances with an umbrella as his partner in a downpour.

"The high point of solo screen dancing is, of course, ringing around the lamp post in the rain in Singin' In The Rain, said Charles Champlin, former arts editor of the Los Angeles Times. "I think it's an absolute masterpiece of the dance form and it happened to happen in the movies."

Kelly, who came from working-class roots in Pittsburgh, was a dance instructor before going on to perform on stage in New York. He was a member of a Broadway chorus line in 1938, and by 1941 had a starring role in Pal Joey.

Famed director David Selznick spotted Kelly in Pal Joey, signed him and brought him to Hollywood.

Kelly went on to became one of Hollywood's biggest stars in the 1940's and 50's with such films as On The Town and Singin' In The Rain — he also co-directed On The Town — and An American In Paris, an ambitious musical set to the music of George Gershwin, which won eight Academy Awards, including best movie, but none for Kelly.

However, he did win a Special Academy Award in 1951 "in appreciation of his versatility as an actor, singer, director and dancer, and especially for his brilliant achievements in the art of choreography on film."

Sri Lanka buries bomb victims



Sri Lankan soldiers patrol Janadhipathi Mawatha, the main road running through Colombo's financial district, Saturday while the devastated Central Bank building lies in ruins behind. Security in the city centre and throughout the capital remains tight in the aftermath of Wednesday's bombing, which claimed as many as 80 lives (Reuter photo)

COLOMBO (AFP) — Funerals got underway in the Sri Lankan capital Saturday for the victims of a truck bomb as the city remained on red alert for more Tamil rebel attacks, police said.

Dozens of burials and cremations of those killed in Wednesday's devastating bomb attack on Sri Lanka's financial hub in downtown Colombo were carried out, witnesses said.

There were no funerals Friday because most people in this mainly Sinhalese Buddhist nation believe it is inauspicious for the dead to be buried Fridays.

Police said 79 bodies had been found so far and another 10 persons had been reported missing after the attack which brought down part of the 11-storey central bank and charred about 10 other buildings in the neighbourhood.

The government has accused the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of bombing the financial centre. The Tigers are leading a guerrilla campaign for a separate homeland for minority Tamils.

All the damaged buildings in downtown Colombo have now been checked for bodies trapped under the debris, a police spokesman said. However, the basement of the bank was yet to be cleared.

The severely damaged Intercontinental Hotel has now been turned into a make-shift police post to provide permits to owners of damaged buildings to begin their own salvage operations, police said.

The Colombo Fort Police Station which is located near the financial centre was also badly damaged.

"We are now getting those who operated businesses in the area to come in and speed up the clearing operation," Colombo Police Chief T. M. Dissanayake said. "All emergency plans are now being carried out."

The entire city centre has been cordoned off by police and troops armed with automatic weapons to keep away site-seers and prevent looting.

Thousands of soldiers and police armed with automatic rifles were deployed in and around Colombo's Independence Square where President Chandrika Kumaratunga is due to attend National Day celebrations Sunday.

Policemen were being brought in from the provinces to reinforce the city during the celebrations marking the 48th anniversary of independence from Britain, police said.

Acting Police Inspector-General Mitra Ariyasinghe said an additional deputy inspector general had been appointed to co-ordinate security arrangements in the capital in view of the Tiger threat.

Gen. Ariyasinghe denied press reports that police looted cash from the central bank shortly after the blast which also triggered fires in many buildings and left over 1,400 people wounded.

"We have no complaints of any looting," Gen. Ariyasinghe said. The state-run Daily News Saturday quoted an unnamed eyewitness as saying that policemen helped themselves to cash and threatened bank guards who tried to stop them.

The government says rescue operations were hampered due to the lack of proper equipment and brought the Colombo Municipal Fire Brigade under air force control in a bid to revamp the service.

Power and Energy Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte said the government would also arrange alternate office space for banks, international airlines and other commercial establishments affected by the bombing.

"The government will get the basic facilities like electricity and telephones organised immediately," Mr. Ratwatte told reporters here. "We want to reconstruct and rebuild the city centre as soon as possible."

Mr. Ratwatte, who is also the junior defence minister, said the president had agreed to pay compensation to those not adequately covered by insurance.

The government said that it had arrested two Tamil men who had confessed to being members of the separatist LTTE and taking part in bombing the central bank.

Northern Ireland rivals bewail forum setback

BANDON, Ireland (R) — Rival Northern Ireland politicians united in voicing disappointment Saturday at the refusal of the IRA's political wing to agree that the people of the British province should agree on their own future.

Leading represenatives of the province's Irish nationalist and pro-British Unionist parties said at a rare meeting in the Irish Republic that Sinn Fein's position was a blow for democracy in the troubled province.

"I think it is a major setback," Ken Maginnis of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) told reporters on arrival for a one-day "encounter group" meeting of politicians from all sides in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Joe Hendron of the moderate Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) said the Sinn Fein stance was a "setback" which could have been predicted because of the slow pace of an Anglo-Irish attempt to forge a lasting settlement.

They were commenting on Sinn Fein's refusal to endorse a core recommendation of a Dublin think-tank which said majority consent should be a governing principle in shaping a lasting settlement for Northern Ireland.

Sinn Fein believes that this will only entrench the veto Protestant Unionists have over the reunification of Ireland and say they should bow to the consent of the people of the whole island of Ireland, who want to see reunification happen.

Mr. Maginnis said Sinn Fein's refusal to endorse the report of the Dublin National Forum for Peace and Reconciliation showed it was still outside mainstream Irish politics despite a 16-month-old ceasefire by its IRA guerrilla supporters.

"It indicates the extent to which they are politically isolated, not just in Northern Ireland but throughout Ireland," he said.

The Dublin Forum was set up by the Irish government to ease Sinn Fein's entry into mainstream politics after its IRA backers declared a ceasefire in a 25-year war against Britain.

Mr. Hendron said: "It will make it very difficult for Sinn Fein's leaders, Gerry Adams and Martin Meguinness."

They are demanding official recognition from Britain and all-party talks by the end of this month.

But Mr. Hendron linked the Sinn Fein move to Britain's refusal to convene all-party peace talks until the IRA disarms, which the guerrilla army refuses to do until the talks are held.

Mr. Hendron said the IRA and its Protestant loyalist rivals declared ceasefires 16 months ago in the belief that this would get their political representatives invitations to all-party talks to secure a permanent peace.

"When the IRA called their ceasefire they were given to understand that there would be all-party talks," he said.

He was speaking 24 hours after gunmen sprayed automatic fire into the house of a sleeping part-time Northern Ireland policeman in one of the worst attacks since the ceasefires.

Bangladesh gripped by another strike

DHAKA (AFP) — An eight-hour general strike called by Bangladesh's major opposition parties against Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government paralysed the capital Dhaka Saturday.

There was no immediate report of violence as police and paramilitary troops patrolled roads gridlocked with thousands of pedal rickshaws and vans, which replaced public transport, witnesses and police said.

In downtown Motijheel district strikers exploded several home-made bombs, but no casualties were reported.

Major markets and schools remained shut but offices and banks were preparing to gradually reopen as the stoppage, the opposition's fifth this year, was expected to wind down in the early afternoon, they said.

Other Bangladeshi cities and towns are not affected by the strike, called by Sheikh Hasina Wajed's Awami League and two other opposition parties to protest alleged police violence on Dhaka University campus during Mrs. Khaleda's visit to a nearby academy Thursday.

Two days of campus violence and clashes with police following the visit left some 200 people injured and resulted in some 100 arrests.

The opposition-backed students' demonstrations followed Mrs. Hasina's call to disrupt the premier's campaigning for opposition-boycotted parliamentary elections on Feb. 15.

The Awami League, along with the Jatiya Party of jailed former President Hussain Mohammad Ershad and fundamentalist Jamaat-E-Islami Party has been spearheading a 22-month protest demanding Mrs. Khaleda and her Bangladesh Nationalist Party government resign.

The opposition wants elections to be held under a caretaker administration, claiming fair polls under Mrs. Khaleda are impossible.

Mrs. Khaleda dissolved the 330-seat parliament in November and has continued as interim premier, dismissing calls for a caretaker government as unconstitutional.

Hutu rebels raid Burundi capital

BUJUMBURA (R) — Hutu rebels attacked a suburb of the Burundian capital Bujumbura but security forces drove them off after a two-hour battle, a senior military officer said.

"We've driven the rebels out of Kamenge in a military operation," Commandant Edouard Nybigera told Reuters Friday night.

The rebels had infiltrated Kamenge, a northern suburb, to attack army and police positions Friday night, he said.

Commander Nybigera gave no details of casualties from the two-hour clash.

The virtual civil war in Burundi pits rebels from the Hutu majority against the Tutsi-dominated army, with civilians often caught in between.

More than 100,000 people have been killed in ethnic violence since the 1993 assasination of Hutu President Melchior Ndadaye, the country's last freely elected leader, by renegade Tutsi soldiers.

"The rebels infiltrated the suburb tonight to attack military positions outside it. We've pushed them out — we've won," said Commander Nybigera, who commands a 1,350-strong force of gendarmes.

Defence Ministry spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Longin Minani downplayed the clash, saying: "The rebels fired at our position to remind us that they were there, and we responded to remind them that we were here."

Reporters estimated several thousand rounds of automatic rifle fire were exchanged and heard prolonged bursts from heavy machine guns from both sides.

The fighting quickly spread into the neighbouring suburbs of Mutanga north, Kinama, Nyakabiga and Rohero 2, they said.

The rebels last attacked the capital between Dec. 6-10, when they were also repulsed from the northern suburbs.

U.N. military sources estimated 53 people were killed and 8,500 civilians fled their homes during the December violence.

In a related development, a U.N. team assessing the feasibility of providing guards for aid workers finished its week-long visit to Burundi Saturday.

Last month U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali proposed that security guards and a peacekeeping force be deployed to protect aid workers and prevent full-blown warfare between Hutus and Tutsis.

N. Korea says no famine but need aid — report

TOKYO (R) — A senior North Korean official has said his country needed more aid to combat a serious food shortage following disastrous floods but was not facing a famine, a Japanese daily reported Saturday.

The economic journal Nihon Keizai Shimbun quoted Ri Song Dae, chairman of North Korea's External Economy Commission, as asking Japan for more food aid.

"We greatly appreciate your (Japan's) aid and we have finished distributing them to the victims of the floods," Mr. Ri told the Nihon Keizai in an interview in Davos, Switzerland, where he was attending the World Economic Forum of financiers, businessmen and government officials.

"As for us, the more additional aid the better," Mr. Ri said.

In the latest flood-related aid from North Korea's traditional enemies, the United States Friday announced it was extending $2 million through the World Food Programme to North Korea.

The U.S. announcement followed a meeting in Honolulu last week between officials from the United States, South Korea and Japan on how to respond to North Korea's food situation. The meeting ended with no obvious agreement.

Responding to South Korea's claims that the North was diverting food aid for military stockpiles, Mr. Ri said: "They are only trying to shift the world's attention away from us. We are a socialist country and distribution is equal. And there is no famine."

South Korea has criticised Japan's moves to extend more rice aid directly to North Korea, saying it should be in agreement with the South.

South Korea has said it was looking for signs of detente before shipping its own rice aid to its hostile neighbour.

Russia to change tack in Chechenya — general

MOSCOW (AFP) — The commander of Russian troops deployed in the troubled southern Republic of Chechenya said Saturday there would be a complete change in Russian policy there, the Interfax News Agency said.

General Viacheslav Tikhomirov said Russian policy would undergo "a 180 degree" turn, possibly indicating Moscow would withdraw its troops, the agency said.

He said talks were underway between Moscow and the pro-Russian Chechenya government of Doku Zavgayev on a plan to withdraw Russian soldiers from the republic which has been in turmoil in a separatist rebellion for the last year.

"It is still too early to set a precise time-table for an army withdrawal," Gen. Tikhomirov said.

Interax, quoting sources close to the Chechen government, said: "The withdrawal of the Russian army could be part of an accord between Moscow and Grozny on a special status for Chechenya."

Russian Nationalities Minister Viacheslav Mikhailov said Saturday Moscow wanted a "peaceful settlement" in Chechenya. He said Russian President Boris Yeltsin was in favour of such a solution.

Mr. Zavgayev, who was installed by Moscow as it moved in troops to crush the uprising, said Friday that Russian troops would soon be out of Chechenya "because we are moving towards a stabilisation." His comments were backed by Mr. Mikhailov Saturday.

Mr. Zavgayev indicated this could happen in the next two to three weeks.

Moscow poured troops into the Caucasus republic in December 1994 to crush a secession bid, but has come under criticism both at home and abroad for its hardline tactics.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975

صوت تعبير يومية عربية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية

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Telephones: **684311, 699634**
Telex: **21497 ALRAI JO**
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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Old ties and new shapes

THE VISIT by a Russian flotilla of 10 warships to two Syrian ports few days ago signals a return to "business as usual" between Damascus and Moscow after a hiatus of several years. Syria and the former Soviet Union enjoyed the best of relations for several decades on all levels including military, political, economical and cultural. It is no coincidence then that Russia should seek to reestablish former and traditional ties with countries that once enjoyed special relations with Moscow even during the communist rule. "We want to express our desire to promote cooperation with countries which existed a long time ago and with those which made new offers to develop cooperation," commented Russian Admiral Igor Kasatonov, after the docking of the Russian ships in Syrian harbours. The admiral went on to confirm that his country wishes to reestablish its presence in the Mediterranean.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has made several moves in recent days to replace liberal and Western-oriented officials by traditional and hard-line people. The replacement of Western-oriented Andrei Kozyrev by former communist spy chief Yevgeny Primakov was but one example of the new trend in Russia. Even in economic policies and practices there are ample signs that Moscow is reconsidering its post-communist stances and abandoning reforms that were promised to Washington, the European Union and World Bank.

These developments suggest that notwithstanding the collapse of the communist order in the former USSR, Moscow will continue to pursue its interests by cultivating again traditional ties and cementing old relations with former allies like Syria. This means that Moscow will not sit idly by and let events run their course in the Middle East without an important role for it. It also means that Russia may be prepared to play a spoiler's role if it does not receive a piece of the international cake. Holding hands with President Hafez Al Assad now in the midst of his crucial peace talks with Israel may not only strengthen the hands of Syria but also offer Moscow a trump card which it can use elsewhere in its international relations especially with the major capitals of the world. Before we know it, Russia could be back occupying a pivotal role in world affairs in a manner not different from its role under communism. The only factor that is keeping Moscow away from its traditional place is its poor economic performance, a problem that it had experienced before and still suffers from in spite of the advent of the free enterprise system. Should the picture change, something which does not appear to be likely, the Russian Federation would be able to regain its superpower stature. Anything less than that would keep Moscow a second class superpower.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for **Al Ra'i** daily demanded that the next government in Jordan give priority to domestic issues for which, he said, urgent solutions are needed. To win the confidence of the man in the street, the new government should embark on serious efforts to tackle internal affairs which have been overlooked for a long time, said Sultan Al Hattab. What the Jordanians want is to see government tackle domestic issues at the political, social and economic levels and an end to government confrontation with the media and Parliament so as to ensure national unity, demanded the writer. On the external front, the writer said, the new government must mend fences with the Gulf states, Syria and Iraq through a well-defined policy conducted with courage and firmness. Criticising the outgoing government, the writer said that in the recent months the government failed to live up to the expectations because it considered any opposition or disapproval of its policies as an opposition to peace, and criticism levelled at its members as criticism of the state as a whole. He said that the outgoing government members lacked harmony in their relations and experience and political vision, that reflected negatively on its performance.

A COLUMNIST for **Al Dustour** reflected on Parliament work, noting that deputies have recently been focusing attention on issues of concern to their respective districts, demanding that the government take speedy action in handling them. Hardly a session is held without witnessing criticism by deputies of government's policies or demands for better services for citizens in the various districts; therefore, the government and Parliament ought to create a joint follow up committee to pursue efforts towards solving these problems, giving priority to the most urgent questions over others, said Mohammad Daoud. If matters are left the way they are, without a responsible body to follow up on solutions, said the writer, nothing can be achieved, and the deputies' demands will not be met. Lauding the deputies' efforts to highlight Jordanian citizens' complaints and requests to the government, the writer said additional attention should be turned to the problems of the remote regions which have been victims of neglect for years.

Sunday's Economic Pulse — By Dr. Fahed Al Fanek

International trade — only viable way for Arab region

THE VOLUME of inter-Arab trade is depressing. It does not exceed nine per cent of the Arab's international trade, and 12 per cent if the exports and imports of oil are excluded.

Arab economists has always been calling for raising this percentage and encouraging trade exchange among Arab countries, but to no avail. Last week, the president of the Jordanian Association of Chambers of Commerce and the president of the Amman Chamber of Commerce once again called for enhancing inter-Arab trade.

Politics of course has something to do with this shameful situation. Bad relations between Arab regimes, which is the norm not the exception, reflect badly on economic ties. Arab economists repeatedly called for the neutralisation of economics from politics but their calls fell on deaf ears.

However, the main reason underlying this weakness in inter-Arab trade may be the similarity of the Arab economies. Agricultural production, for instance, in Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon is almost the same. Light industries in the countries of the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt are about the same. The economies of North African countries are, to a certain extent, copies of each other, geared towards the integration with the European markets.

In general, Arab production capabilities are competitive rather than complementary to each other. It is difficult, almost impossible, to call for economic specialisation among independent and sovereign countries in the absence of a central authority which can coordinate production, secure justice and arrange compensation for sacrifices.

This may be the main factor behind the decline in inter-Arab trade. Appealing to pan-Arabism and national feelings is nonsense. Trade is not based on feelings but on material interest and financial calculations.

Even Jordan, which has the highest Arab trade percentage of all other Arab countries, does not claim that it is behaving in this way due to national considerations. Objective factors compelled Jordan to have a substantial portion of its trade with the Arab World. True, Jordan exports most of its vegetable surpluses to the Gulf states and Lebanon, but only because of failure to penetrate the European market. Jordan has no alternative but to import oil from Arab countries because there is no other available source of cheaper oil.

The future trend is towards the withdrawal of the state from direct decision making in the foreign trade sector in most Arab countries. Leaving this activity to the private sector, which follows the signals of the market and the calculated profitability and feasible opportunities, may reduce the negative effect of politics.

However, we should be realistic and not expect a jump in the inter-Arab trade, neither now nor in the future, because when it comes to imports, Arab markets are fully oriented towards Europe, America and South East Asia. Arab export commodities are almost confined to petroleum and phosphate; the markets for these commodities are international.

Arab markets, therefore, are condemned to dependence on international markets whether we like it or not.

Inter-Arab trade has no future. We had better realise this fact and start looking forward towards stronger links with the international markets, especially when we join the World Trade Organisation (WTO), formerly known as GATT. From now on, trade has no national boundaries, the globe is our market, competitiveness and relative advantage should be the name of the game.

Blue skies in Palestine —and now the real work

By Flora Lewis

JERUSALEM — It took nearly 18 years after the Camp David Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty to carry out its provisions for Palestinian autonomy and elections. That should be a caveat about expectations for a full, definitive settlement between Israelis and Palestinians by the three-year deadline for negotiations set to start in May.

None of the really hard issues — borders, refugees, settlements, water, Jerusalem — has yet been addressed. During the campaign for the 88-member Palestine Authority, which has just been chosen, it even became evident that Yasser Arafat — now president-elect — won't have an easy time fulfilling his pledge to remove clauses on the destruction of Israel from the PLO's charter by March 20.

His overwhelming victory, and the big voter turnout except where Israeli troops got in the way, showed the great majority of Palestinians now do support the drive for peace. For the first time, it gave him undisputed legitimacy as the voice of Palestine and the interlocutor with Israel.

And it gave Palestinians the proud right to say they conducted the most democratic elections ever held by Arabs, though that isn't saying as much as it should. Perversely, it was the widespread complaints about the high-handed authoritarianism of Mr. Arafat's Fateh organisation that showed how seriously people do want the guarantees of democracy, "not like in other Arab countries," several told me.

That is going to be part of the trouble. Neither attitudes nor everyday lives have basically changed. Mr. Arafat hasn't done a lot to persuade his people of the need for compromise. Even on the purely rhetorical issue of changing the charter, they said: "What will we get for it?" Few are aware that it was a condition for what has already been achieved and that if it is not fulfilled, there is a real risk of blocking the whole process.

Mr. Arafat is caught in the democratic bind of negotiating. His constituents want him to be tough: their only argument is how intransigent. But he won't get anywhere with Israel if he holds out for maximum goals.

The elections, an essential mile-stone, were a peculiar mix of a national referendum and a choice of representatives. The large corps of more than 700 international monitors, in which I participated, treated them as a more or less normal political procedure, if a historic first, and paid attention to the usual requirements against fraud and intimidation. There were lapses, but not so many as to invalidate results. The polling officials were conscientious.

"If mutually acceptable success is achieved, Palestine could become a beacon for the Arab World, as it has been a consuming, emotional torch for at least two generations. Palestinians and Israelis have to work it out with each other, but the world can't set their conflict aside as just cleaning up. They are only beginning to resolve it."

But for the voters, the big, overriding issue was, as one schoolteacher told me with excitement, that the Palestinians are making their country. She, like most, was full of expectations.

I was assigned to monitor polling stations in Salfit, a rural district near the Green Line with Israel. You can see Tel Aviv from the hills. And you can't help seeing Ariel, a new hilltop Israeli town euphemistically called a "settlement" but which looks like a suburb in any Western country. It is a different world from the Arab towns and villages, with trim new houses, paved streets, plenty of lights.

In Ariel, a pretty blond barmaid, recently emigrated from Finland, casually summed up the whole conflict when I asked what she thought of the Palestinian elections. "They want to make a country here. How can they when we already have a country?"

That has been the central issue all along. The Oslo accords were a way of sidling up to it. Agreements are based on ambiguities. Few are ready for clarity. There are endless arguments at each step, sometimes over absurd trivia.

Only the day before the elections was the issue of the hole in Jerusalem ballot boxes settled. Israel consented to allow a small percentage of Arab Jerusalemites to vote in the city, but only in post offices, on the pretext that they would be mailing their ballots and not establishing Palestinian rights within city limits. So Israeli officials said the box should have its slot in the side, like a postbox, while Palestinian authorities said no, in the top. They compromised: It was on the edge.

Even such a ridiculous detail is considered highly symbolic, by both sides. What has been achieved, essentially mutual recognition, is irrevocable, but momentum is still precarious. The big breakthrough has yet to come.

There were torrential rains and a snowstorm just before, but election day was bright blue. Perhaps it was an omen. The serious disturbances that had been feared were averted. Important steps have been taken, but there is still a long way to go, the hardest part of the way.

If mutually acceptable success is achieved, Palestine could become a beacon for the Arab World, as it has been a consuming, emotional torch for at least two generations. Palestinians and Israelis have to work it out with each other, but the world can't set their conflict aside as just cleaning up. They are only beginning to resolve it.

International Herald Tribune

Lack of information protects bad management

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

"MANAGEMENT UNCERTAINTY" was the name I gave two weeks ago to a prominent style of management in Jordan. This style differs from other management styles in that it introduces a new control tool to the management process: it withholds information from the employee and keeps it in the hands of the manager.

At each level of management the manager selectively hides some information from the person(s) below him/her. The reason for this intentional barricade is the maintenance of the manager's edge over the employees, thus insuring the security of his/her position.

It is an "I" and "they" approach: The more information "they" possess the more work "I" have to do. The rational thing to do is to keep them (employees) in the dark so that the manager's decisions could not be challenged. Better still, when the manager goes on vacation no one can really fill his shoes. Thus, not only is the manager's decision beyond reproach it is also beyond analysis and challenges by his employees because they do not have the information to even begin to ponder their role in the organisation.

In economics, the entrepreneur is assumed to go into business to maximise profits. But what do managers maximise? To answer this question one must fully address a theory in economics known as the agency cost theorem. According to this theory, an employee, whether manager or clerk, is the agent of the owner. This agent runs a part or the whole of the enterprise for the owner who cannot run it for one reason or another. The agent has one incentive for work and that is his/her own revenue which normally translates into salary. Therefore, all the employee really cares about is to maximise his salary.

Of course, the rational action for the employee is either to work hard enough to keep the company profitable enough in the short run or until he receives his salary, or to work for a short while at a company with a minimal work input and then move to another firm after his old one sinks. Assuming that reputations do not matter, all the employee has to do is show up at work, put in the least amount of effort required for the job, and receive his/her salary.

The employee who does expectional work and generates profits for the firm, being an agent, tries to derive a reward for his efforts. If the reward does not increase with the success of the agent's endeavours, he may resort to compensating himself through perks. In other words, the star manager tries to make his job and life more comfortable through luxuries.

For example, in the sixties, John Z. de Lorean, the youngest vice president ever of General Motors, gave himself many company perks, including a custom designed car that cost the company over $100,000 then. (Unfortunately for Mr. de Lorean management did not take kindly to his GM-financed superstar status and fired him. Years later Mr. de Lorean was filmed by the FBI trying to sell cocaine to save his career).

The typical public sector employee cannot be made to work hard, and if the organisation is not doing well, all the government has to do is raise taxes or borrow the money.

Also, since hiring and firing is not motivated by business decisions, the agent looks for perks and obtains them to maximise his personal revenue. If the agent is not given these on-the-job perks, the rational thing for him to do is to give less and less of his efforts to his work and to start shirking.

But what about promotions? Since most government work is hard to evaluate, measuring performance and performance-based promotions can be a real personal affair. Therefore, the public sector employee has no economic incentive to work hard.

In the industrialised nations, in order to avoid the risk of having managers spend too much on luxury items, thus eating away at the profits of the enterprise, the owner either designs monitoring schemes (auditors and outside management consultants) or makes the managers part-owners through profit-sharing schemes.

Excellent managers are either rewarded with lucrative contracts or are lured away by a rival who is willing to give them better contracts.

The more sophisticated the information system is in an economy, the more likely it is that good agents are better rewarded and bad ones are demoted. Therefore, the purveyance of bad management in a system is an indication of a retarded information structure.

News can only travel fast if there are means of communication, which is exactly why our managerial practices are so lacking. It takes a very long time for the market players to distinguish between the bad managers and the good managers and once this is established and the bad ones are finally indentified it is usually too late. They have already been hired and they have boarded all the information at their organisations that is necessary to make them indispensable. Thus, our management system has been developed to protect bad management.

LETTERS

Help needed

To the Editor:

IN REFERENCE to Suad Alul's letter (Jordan Times, Thursday, Feb. 1, 1996) concerning the need to provide care for the terminally ill, I am so happy to find someone who feels the same way we do.

What Ms. Alul in asking for has already happened. The Malath Foundation for Humanistic Care is a registered society which provides care for the terminally ill and their families. It was established in 1993 by a group of concerned professionals and community members with the support of the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) and USAID.

Home care is provided by trained nurses in collaboration with family physicians and a pain specialist, social workers and other health professionals.

Since 1993 we have provided care for 56 patients and their families, 40 of them in 1995. Our services include assessing the patients' situation and identifying their needs and working with the family and the health professionals to meet these needs.

The biggest problem that faces us is pain control. Our society has worked closely with the Ministry of Health to make pain killers easier available for these patients but still a lot remains to be done in terms of training physicians and other health professionals in pain control.

Another issue that faces us is that most patients who we care for do not know that they have cancer or that they are dying. This puts a strain on our nurses who spend a great deal of energy avoiding talking about it instead of dealing with the issue of helping the patient and family prepare for the death.

In addition, and because our services are free, there is a great need for fund raising which, as everyone knows, is very difficult. There are some people and agencies who have supported our work very generously, but it is not sufficient. We would like to see the Ministry of Health, the Royal Medical Services and other health care providers and insurance companies reimburse us for our care.

We believe that our care allows the patients to be at home surrounded by their belongings, among their families and friends. At the same time, it is more cost effective and can release beds in hospitals badly needed.

We provide care for any patient we can reach since our resources are limited. We have produced pamphlets, articles have been published in the Jordan Times and the Arabic dailies, the television programme Heart Beat has featured our care, in addition to appearnces on several TV and radio programmes. We have also given talks about our work in a variety of settings.

We need all the support we can get, whether financial or technical. We look forward to hearing from interested readers. Our telephone is 685767.

Sawsan Majali Mahasneh,
President,
Malath Foundation for Humanistic Care,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they want to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Speaking of Egypt

Some people think the state is what counts; I believe that over time people are what counts, says ***Tahseen Basheer****, former spokesman for Egypt's "new pharaohs."*

THERE IS a legend in Egypt about how the last Mamluk escaped certain death, says Tahseen Basheer, senior fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace. According to the legend, when Mohammad Ali took power in Egypt in 1805, he had his soldiers round up the previous ruling Mamluks in the Citadel of Cairo and execute them. One Mamluk leapt on horseback from a stone wall of the Citadel to the ground below. Although the horse died, the Mamluk escaped to a new life in Nubia, where he became governor of a province and had at least one son: Basheer's grandfather, according to family legend and land records of the time.

Basheer tells the story of the Mamluk's daring exploits with pleasure, perhaps because the tale illustrates one source of his zest for public life, not to mention his determination and survival skills. From his early days as student activist, Basheer became known in Egypt as an independent and principled risk-taker. In the diplomatic corps, he worked closely with Egypt's two visionary leaders Gamal Abdul Nasser and Anwar Sadat — often called "the new pharaohs." Basheer served as spokesman for Nasser and Sadat as they, respectively, steered Egypt on its dramatic journey as leader of the pan-Arab movement in its opposition to Israel, and then as peacemaker in the Middle East.

Speaking out

Basheer's father had earned his medical degree at the University of Chicago, and when Basheer graduated at the top of his class from the University of Alexandria in 1950, he, too, chose to study in America, rather than in England, which had occupied Egypt in 1882 and made it a protectorate. First at Princeton and later at Harvard, Basheer became active in Arab student affairs and organisations, and with a few friends founded the Arab Student Organisation for the United States and Canada. The group envisioned a "United States of the Arabs," an entity that would embody constitutional democracy. Basheer says. "None of the Arab governments liked us, and the feeling was to a great extent mutual."

Basheer was at Harvard Summer School — where he later earned a master's degree in political economy under the direction of John Kenneth Galbraith — when Nasser, then a young colonel in the Egyptian army, with a group of other military officers overthrew Egypt's monarchy in a coup d'état in 1952. Basheer, as president of the Arab student organisation, spearheaded the group's adoption of a resolution supporting the Egyptian revolution, but demanding a new constitution, free elections, and freedom of the press and judiciary. The Egyptian government responded by withdrawing his scholarship.

Nevertheless, Basheer was becoming well-known in political circles in Egypt for his activism and leadership among Arab students abroad, many of whom were the intellectual leaders of their generation. Thus when Basheer, still in America, supported Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1956, he was offered a job as spokesman for the Egyptian mission to the United Nations and embarked upon his career in public service. "I did very well," Basheer says. "America was my second home. I knew the country inside-out. In two years I gave 320 lectures in America. I was quoted... in the New York Times often." Basheer helped prepare for Nasser's visit to America in 1960, then moved to a new job as cultural and information officer at the Egyptian Consulate in San Francisco.

After serving in London and New York as acting director and then deputy director of the Arab League in 1964-69, Basheer returned to Egypt, which was struggling to recuperate from its defeat by Israel in the Six Day War of 1967. Basheer had come to Nasser's attention for two studies he had written: one on the Palestinian issue and the other on U.S.-Egyptian relations. Nasser asked Basheer to serve as his spokesman, a job that had not existed before in Egypt.

When Nasser died in 1970, Sadat, who was his vice-president, succeeded him. Basheer wanted to move on to a new post because the job of spokesman was so difficult. "As spokesman you are the one to raise to the president, face-to-face, sensitive issues that he doesn't like to hear," Basheer says. However, Sadat insisted he stay — and he did. Under Sadat, Basheer helped prepare for the 1973 war, which, he says, restored Egypt's pride and thus paved the way for peace.

Basheer argued with Sadat frequently, though their difference were never bitter. "He used to say to me, 'Who's president?'" Basheer recalls. But finally, things came to a head. In a five-hour meeting, Basheer told Sadat that many people in his entourage and family had been tainted by corruption and were damaging his integrity. Shortly thereafter, while flying back to Egypt from a meeting, Basheer read in an Egyptian newspaper that he had had been reassigned to another diplomatic post. "Sometimes (when you hold the truth up for someone to see) you destroy the mirror," Basheer says philosophically.

For several months Basheer waited in limbo before he was assigned as permanent ambassador to the Arab League in Cairo. When he saw Sadat again, Basheer didn't mention his reassignment. "In retrospect, being spokesman was hard work, but I learned a lot from it," Basheer says.

While at the Institute, Basheer is analysing Sadat's transformation of Egypt's policy from a strategy of confrontation to a strategy of peace. For peace to work, Basheer says, "what matters over time is whether you create a constituency that will support peace." As a result of his research, Basheer hopes to draw lessons from the Egyptian approach that could be applied to other protracted conflicts in the Middle East.

Speaking for Egypt

When President Sadat was assassinated in 1981, his vice-president, Hosni Mubarak, succeeded him. Mr. Mubarak appointed Basheer ambassador to Canada in 1981-85, after which Basheer retired from government service. However, Basheer continued his practice of conveying to the president — this time Mr. Mubarak, and this time through his foreign minister or chief of cabinet — issues raised in diplomatic circles that had a bearing on Egyptian policies.

By 1992 Basheer began to feel that "either the message was not getting through or Mubarak was *not listening.*" So Basheer wrote Mr. Mubarak a long public letter that covered a full page in a Cairo newspaper. "Nothing like this had ever been done in Egypt before," Basheer says of the letter. "I listed all the issues that worried me then and worry me now. I said I was writing because the lines of communication were suffering arteriosclerosis." In the letter, Basheer addressed three main issues the lack of checks and balances on the presidency, corruption, and the failure to address social and economic problems. Basheer recommended that Mr. Mubarak establish councils of experts to advice him, that government officials make their finances public, and that Mr. Mubarak initiate a revision of the constitution to increase political participation.

"When the Egyptian people have a growing role in running the state, this will have a positive effect on the Middle East," Basheer says. "We have a lot of problems in Egypt and only a people facing their problems... with a sense of realism and justice can devise solutions."

Basheer says he speaks out only after thinking about an issue for a long time. "I have what they call the camel's patience. But if you irritate the camel enough, he will let you know it."

Terrorism in retreat in Upper Egypt

By James Whittington

ASSIUT, the provincial capital of Upper Egypt, no longer lives up to its reputation as a hotbed for dangerous Islamic militants. A mixture of iron-fist security operations, increased money for development, and attractive investment incentives are working to transform the town from a terrorism base to a revitalised centre for commerce and industry.

The dawn to dusk curfews have long been lifted, Egyptian special forces have moved on to other trouble spots, and what was only last year a no-go area to foreigners is readying itself to welcome back tourists.

"We've turned our back on the past and are focused on one main objective: to get people to Assiut for investment. This is the only way we can avoid a repeat of what's happened here," says Kadrie Abu Hussein, general secretary of the town's governorate.

As a sign of the times, Assiut's new governor, Mohammad Ragai Al Tahlawi, who was appointed last week, was taken from the town's university rather than the ranks of the police like his predecessors.

Located on the broad fertile plains of the Nile, 375 kilometres south of Cairo, Assiut is typical of Upper Egypt which has a distinct character from the rest of the country.

After decades of neglect, the region is generally poorer and less developed than the rest of the country. Per capita income, at about $330 a year, is about half that of the rest of the country while infant mortality rates, adult illiteracy and unemployment are noticeably higher.

Assiut itself, once a prosperous centre of private enterprise, suffered particularly badly from the nationalisation policies of President Gamal Abdul Nasser, its most famous son, who overthrew the colonial British-backed monarchy in 1952. The gradual decline in living standards, increased unemployment, especially among high-school graduates, and the seeming indifference to the region's plight by successive governments in Cairo subsequently proved a fertile breeding ground for radical Islamist groups.

It was in Assiut University in the 1970s that the formation took place of the militant group Gamma'a Al Islamiya which has been behind much of the insurgency over the past few years.

Young sa'idis (or southerners) from poor families with little hope of anything better than a dull and badly-paid job in the public sector proved ideal recruits to the radical brand of Islam which the Gamma's touted as the only solution to save the region from social and economic malaise.

"People here have been living in unrealistic conditions for so long it's not surprising that some were persuaded to make trouble. It was not a religious dispute or real fanaticism, it was simply the drastic economic situation," says Mr. Mokhtar Hussein, a wealthy Egyptian who has come back to his family's roots to invest in the new Assiut with a number of agro-industrial projects and a new luxury hotel.

Islamist violence erupted in Egypt at the end of 1992 when the Gamma'a vowed to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak's government. While occasional attacks against senior government officials and tourists in Cairo made the headlines in the foreign press, many areas in Upper Egypt were subject to an almost daily dose of bloodshed.

In Assiut, the town's large Coptic community, a Christian minority, which traditionally prospered as landowners and merchants, were a favourite target for the militants and by December 1993, thousands of extra police troops had to be called in and all roads to the town sealed off to try and subdue the violence.

"The situation was terrible. We were always scared of being attacked by one of the terrorists but were more scared of the police who were very provocative. Whenever they got together in groups there was always trouble," said one Copt who declined to be named.

Once security was under control the government beefed up its intelligence and surveillance operations and moved swiftly to try and alleviate some of the area's economic problems.

Public money was found to upgrade the town's infrastructure, build new roads and bridges and investment incentives were announced to attract the private sector with free land and tax exemptions.

"One of the most important things to do is to try and change the mentality of the lower classes and particularly the young. We have to create jobs, put money in their pockets, and give them a sense of opportunity and entrepreneurship," explains Mr. Fouad Fattah, who arrived in Assiut at the end of 1992 to set up a regional office of the government's Social Fund for Development, one of Egypt's most successful programmes aimed at helping the underprivileged.

The fund, which is backed by the World Bank and donor countries, has so far spent EGP 108 million (£21.1 million) in grants, for public and community works, and credit lines to more than 2,400 small enterprises throughout the governorate.

Mr. Ibrahim Lofti Dobbes, who borrowed EGP 100,000 with his brothers to set up the first rubber parts factory in Upper Egypt, says the money has made a huge difference to his family and his village. With 24 employees he works a two-shift day to keep up with orders. "Without this money we would still be waiting for a job with the government," he says.

Despite the turnaround in Assiut's fortune's, however, trouble is never far away.

Only 87 kilometres north of Assiut is the town of Malawi where special forces are still battling with militant renegades. "The terrorist action pushed the government to do something for this area but this mustn't be a one-off, unless the people feel a difference on a personal level there will be trouble again," warns private investor, Mr. Hussein.

The Financial Times

The war that never ended

'The Ministry of Defence are too frightened to say that the Gulf war was not a success because it poisened its own troops'

By Rebecca Fowler

LONDON — Paul Ash spent weeks on the front line in the Gulf war. He was 22, married, outgoing, popular with his mates. Paul and his comrades in the Fusiliers had gone to Saudi Arabia "full of pride" to bring down Saddam Hussein. They had trained for weeks; they were keen for action. The possibility that their worst nightmare might come true, that they might be attacked by chemical or biological weapons, did not shake their resolve.

More than 50,000 British servicemen were immunised against attacks. The Gulf war was supremely modern, yet looming over it was the spectre of anthrax, mustard gas and bubonic plague.

Five years on, thousands of British and American soldiers who served in the Gulf claim they are living through another nightmare, one they were never prepared for: Gulf war syndrome, the mysterious condition whose symptoms vary from motor neurone disease and cancer to a skin rash. Paul Ash has become listless, moody, aggressive and withdrawn.

The syndrome has apparently blighted the lives of 740 ex-service personnel. Those who believe in the condition say 15 have died from it. Recently, it appears to be affecting the children of servicemen — many have been born with deformities.

After three years of pressure from the victims, the government announced Jan. 31 that it would support an investigation into the syndrome. For the veterans it was better late than never. But why has it taken the government so long to take seriously an affliction that has devastated the lives of so many? Is it healthy scepticism about the causes of the condition, or has there been a cynical attempt to silence the campaign and avoid tarnishing the legacy of the war?

After every war there are hundreds of servicemen who suffer from trauma and psychological illnesses. Within any large group of people some premature deaths would be normal. Yet according to Gulf war syndrome campaigners, something more sinister began to appear once the soldiers got back to normal life. At first, a handful reported cases of nausea, diarrhoea, breathing difficulties. Then the list began to grow and the condition worsened.

The government refused to accept the possibility that the syndrome existed until Jan. 31. Nicholas Soames, the armed forces minister, was insisting last year that the veterans' claims were "a mixture of unsubstantiated rumour (and) incorrect information," a claim repeated by John Major.

For sufferers, the government response has been viewed with something more profound than disappointment. Campaigners saw it as squarely within the Ministry of Defence's tradition of disregarding the plight of hundreds of individuals who had risked their lives for their country. Paul Ash is bitter: "The MoD are too frightened to say that the Gulf war wasn't a success because it poisoned its own troops."

The contrast with the way that the United States has dealt with victims is stark. American experts stress the mysterious nature of the illness as much as their British counterparts, yet in the U.S. £54 million has been ploughed into research into the condition that has affected more than 10,000 of the 700,000 U.S. troops who served in the Gulf. The Clinton administration also agreed to compensate victims while further investigations were undertaken into their illnesses.

According to Colonel Terry English, controller of welfare for the Royal British Legion, the U.S. was anxious from the outset to be sensitive to the fate of its returning heroes. "The Ministry of Defence was very reluctant to recognise this condition. They said the original numbers affected fell within the amount you would expect to fall ill from that size of population. Part of the American response is in their culture. They are still very aware of the problems they faced over the treatment of veterans after Vietnam, and they are determined to get this right."

Although the announcement of Jan. 31 inquiry, which will work in tandem with American research, was welcomed by the veterans, most remain cynical of the government's role. Many believe that the government's hand was forced by the recent focus of the 60 affected offspring of the victims. These children, little more than two years old, blighted by deformities, respiratory infections and skin problems, have begun to capture the nation's sympathy.

Sarah Whitehead's husband, Paul, served in the Royal Engineers, one of the first units into Kuwait. Two-and-a-half years ago she gave birth to Ben. His left arm, shoulder and hand is much smaller than the right side, and he has severely deformed fingers and hands.

"Nobody likes to see children suffering. That's what really pulls at people's heartstrings. For soldiers, it's different. They're expected to put themselves at risk, whether it's fair or not. But when the public sees these tiny, smiling faces still in the puppy dog bracket, they respond — and the government cannot ignore that," Mrs. Whitehead says.

It is still the beginning of the battle facing the veterans. The inquiry's initial focus will be on whether the abnormalities in babies are disproportionately high among the children of veterans. That task alone may take more than a year.

If the inquiry establishes that there is an unusually high number of birth defects, there will be an examination of its likely causes. Yet even if the syndrome's existence were proven, that does not mean the veterans will win compensation. That would be the end of a long tradition for the MoD. The department has always fiercely resisted paying compensation: most famously, it refused to compensate victims of nuclear tests who were exposed to radiation.

So even the inquiry set up Jan. 31 is just another stage in a long legal battle for the victims. For the families, the most troubling issue is not the compensation. "What we really want to know is what the future holds for us. Until something is done, we will never know where this syndrome might be leading for Ben," Mrs. Whitehead says.

"Already in the United States research has shown children developing cancer. We want to know what to expect, where Ben might be when he reaches six or seven. We want an explanation, and just some idea of what tomorrow might hold for us."

The Independent

Kabariti in intense consultations

(Continued from page 1)

While Salameh Hammad and Hisham Al Tal, the respective ministers of interior and justice, will most likely quit the Cabinet, lips were tight on who might take over from them. Tareq Alaeddin, an adviser to His Majesty King Hussein who resigned his post yesterday, is a strong candidate for the post of minister of interior. Other choices included Al Ahd Party leader Abdul Hadi Majali who, other reports indicated, would be named as deputy prime minister and minister of public works.

According to sources, the strongest candidate for the minister of information post was Jordan's Ambassador to Tel Aviv Marwan Muasher, though no official confirmation of that report was available. There were reports that Mr. Kabariti was considering abolishing the Ministry of Information, which only exists in Third World countries, but the sources said that several legal hitches made it difficult for this option to be adopted for now. Mr. Kabariti may thus opt to name a minister of information who would be entrusted with the task of amending legislation that would allow for the abolishing of the ministry altogether, the sources said.

The post of minister of foreign affairs, according to the sources, was still undecided Saturday evening, with speculation ranging from reports that Mr. Kabariti intended to keep the post for himself and appoint a minister of state for foreign affairs to some reports indicating that Ambassador to Washington Fayez Tarawneh was going to be recalled to Amman to assume this post.

Arafat blames donors, Israel

(Continued from page 1)

been among the problems dogging the implementation of the peace accords.

Mr. Peres, who arrived here Friday, gave an address to a plenary session of the forum in which he spoke of the long process which led to the Washington peace signing.

Khasawneh appointed Royal Court chief

(Continued from page 1)

Yanal Hikmat and Tareq Alaeddin. The announcement said the change was effective as of Feb. 3.

The change was seen as a significant step in the King's effort to enable the new generation of politicians to take over from the old guard and removing obstacle which may hinder the awesome task facing Mr. Kabariti's government.

The appointment of Mr. Khasawneh, a professional diplomat who gained the respect of many of his peers for his commitment and sound legal council during the three years of Middle East peace negotiations with Israel and afterwards as legal advisor to the King and the state, has been received as "very positive" by many politicians.

"There is a political message in the King's choice of a person who can ensure a positive link with the government and maintain a smooth relationship with it," a former senior official told the Jordan Times.

As old-time friends, Mr. Kabariti and Mr. Khasawneh are expected to work as a team, under the guidance of His Majesty and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, to introduce profound change in the bureaucracy and the country as a whole, as their mandate will make clear in the letter of appointment which is expected to be announced today.

The former official points to two separate examples of the relationship between the Royal Court and the government. One was the "very smooth" relationship between former Prime Minister Mudar Badran and then Royal Court Chief Abdul Hamid Sharaf in the late seventies. The other was the "very strained" relationship between former Prime Minister Ahmad Obeidat and then Royal Court Chief Marwan Qassem in 1984. "Let us say that the King this time opted for the first kind of relationship," the former official said.

Awn Shawkat Al Khasawneh was born in Amman on Feb. 22, 1950 and received his primary and secondary education at the Islamic Educational College of Amman and his university education at Cambridge University (Queen's College) where he read history and law and then did postgraduate work in international law (M.A. LL.M — Cantab).

He joined the Jordanian diplomatic service in 1975 and served as second, then first secretary in the Jordanian permanent mission to the United Nations in New York 1976-1980. From 1980 to 1985 he worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with special responsibility for international organisations and international law. In the years 1985-1990 he was head of the Legal Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1990 he was seconded to the Royal Court where he worked as legal advisor to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan. He was given the rank of ambassador in 1992 and in 1995 he was appointed advisor to His Majesty the King and advisor of the state on international law with the rank of minister.

Mr. Khasawneh represented Jordan in 18 sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations (the sixth legal committee) since 1976 and was Jordan's alternate representative on the Security Council, 1981-1982. He was a member of most Jordanian delegations to meetings of the Arab League, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organisation of Islamic Conference held in the years 1980-1988. From 1991-1994 he was a member of, and legal advisor to the Jordanian delegation to the peace negotiations in the Middle East.

The offices to which he was elected include: Member of the Arab International Law Commission, 1982; reelected thrice; member and then chairman of the U.N. Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities 1984-1993; special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Dimensions of Forcible Population Transfer; chairman of Commission IV: UNESCO General Conference, 1993; member of the United Nations International Law Commission since 1986; member of the Jordanian Royal Commission on Legal and Administrative Reform, 1994.

Mr. Khasawneh has a number of publications to his credit. He holds the Jordanian Istiqlal Medal, First class.

Iraqi return to oil market unlikely to hurt Gulf budgets

ABU DHABI (AFP) — An Iraqi return to the oil market after more than five years of U.N. sanctions would put pressure on crude prices but is unlikely to hurt Gulf budgets, experts said Saturday.

Oil prices have already been weakened by the news of negotiations between Iraq and the United Nations on the terms of an oil-for-food deal, easing the sanctions in force since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

But they are not expected to collapse when Iraqi crude begins flowing into the world market, the experts said.

"It is normal that the international oil market becomes jittery and oil prices come under pressure when there is information that fresh quantities of crude are about to find their way onto the market," said Mohammad Al Asumi, chief economist at the state-run Emirates Industrial Bank.

"But that does not mean prices will collapse as was the case in 1986 when there was a production war. The quantity Iraq will be allowed to export could be absorbed provided there is discipline within OPEC," he told AFP.

"A decline of $1 or $2 in the prices over their 1995 level will not largely affect the budgets of Arab Gulf states as they are usually tailored to a conservative price of between $14 and $15 a barrel," he pointed out.

Iraq and the United Nations are to resume talks on the oil-for-food deal in New York Tuesday. Previous negotiations failed to produce results but oil analysts in the Gulf said they expected a positive outcome from this round.

They referred to jubilation by Iraqis at the news of Baghdad's agreement to reenter negotiations on the deal, adding they believed that the leadership feared a public backlash if the talks collapsed.

Under the U.N. brokered deal Iraq will be allowed to export $2 billion worth of crude oil over a period of six months.

Experts said this meant nearly 700,000 barrels per day (b/d) in current prices but the amount could largely increase as prices might decline when Iraq turns on its taps.

Oil prices have ranged between $16 and $17 over the past week, equivalent to their 1995 level and higher than the 1994 price of $15.50.

According to United Arab Emirates (UAE) officials, the return of Iraq, the second biggest oil power in the world after Saudi Arabia, will not have a strong influence on crude prices if OPEC takes action.

"The UAE does not expect a drastic drop in world oil prices. OPEC will find a solution," the minister of state for financial and industrial affairs, Ahmad Al Tayer, told local reporters.

But that was not the view of Kuwaiti economist Jassim Al Sadoun who doubted the ability of the 12-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

"It seems OPEC will wait for the agreement to be signed before it meets and decides on action. It insists on being an organisation of reaction rather than action," Mr. Sadoun said in his weekly economic report on Saturday.

OPEC has said it would convene an emergency meeting once Iraq is permitted to resume oil supplies but Gulf officials have ruled out a revision of the quota system before the embargo on Baghdad is fully lifted.

This means Saudi Arabia and other Gulf oil heavyweights will likely maintain their output level for the first half of 1996 and it could be extended for the whole year if OPEC decided to roll over its ceiling for the second half.

Saudi Arabia and Oman are the only Arab Gulf states that have so far released their annual budget for 1996 and both of them forecast low spending.

The two other main oil producers, Kuwait and the UAE, are also expected to keep expenditure under control to contain the deficit.

"Gulf states realise Iraq could return to the oil market this year or at any time. From their budgets this year and the two previous years, you can see they do not expect any price rise," a Gulf banker said.

World Bank sets sights on Bosnia, Palestinian reconstruction

WYE WOODS, Maryland (AFP) — The World Bank is gearing up for reconstruction of Bosnia and autonomous Palestinian territories as part of a new role for the international organisation.

Although Bosnia's problems are vastly different from those of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the reconstruction involves a similar strategy, according to World Bank experts gathered in Maryland for a seminar on the two projects.

For the Palestinian territories, 42 international donors including the World Bank pledged $2.4 billion in December 1993.

So far $900 million has been allocated in infrastructure projects related to water treatment, schools, housing and a tax collection system.

In Bosnia, where the process is just getting started, things seem to be moving faster. International donors offered $510 million in December after the signing of the Dayton peace accord and are expected to offer more in April.

The needs for the most urgent project are estimated at $2 billion for 1996 alone and $5.1 billion over the next four years. About $150 million has been disbursed by the bank in the form of long-term interest-free loans.

But Christine Wallich, a World Bank economist, said the overall needs for Bosnia could top $20 billion.

"If we wanted to rebuilt all the houses, we would need $4 billion," she said. The reconstruction programme now calls for just a fraction of that — $400 million.

It is a new thing for the World Bank to calculate these types of needs and to coordinate activities of international donors.

The money has been channelled through an intermediary because Bosnia technically is ineligible for aid because of its arrears. The Netherlands has just paid off Bosnia's $450 million debt to the International Monetary Fund.

The bank is for the first time decentralising control of operations in the Palestinian territories.

The organisatison is looking to finance tangible projects like hospitals or schools, not only for the obvious immediate benefits, but also because it does not want to be part of a government budget over which it has little control.

But the new operations are giving the bank growing pains, officials acknowledge.

"We are a large institution which moves slowly," said World Bank official Steve Holtman, who is preparing a study on the new operations.

"We don't know how to work at a national level when the state is disrupted," he said.

In Rwanda, for example, which received only emergency aid, "we are not really sure what to do," he said, but added that Bosnia and the Palestinian operations are opening up new avenues for the organisation.

UAE economy grows by 6.5 % in 1995

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) economy grew by nearly 6.5 per cent in 1995 due to higher crude prices and expansion in non-oil sectors, the state-run Emirates Industrial Bank (EIB) said Saturday.

The gross domestic product (GDP) grew to 143.5 billion dirhams ($39.1 billion) in 1995 from 134.8 billion dirhams ($36.73 billion) in 1994, the bank said in a study carried by the official news agency WAM.

The 1995 growth is nearly double the 3.7 per cent rate recorded in 1994, when oil prices dipped to $15.50, their lowest level in five years.

EIB said the rise in crude prices to $16.8 in 1995 boosted the oil sector's contribution to the GDP by 7.3 per cent, to 48.3 billion dirhams ($12.26 billion) in 1994.

It showed most of the non-oil sector's components grew in 1995 as the government maintained high spending and the private sector gained momentum.

Banking increased by 5.9 per cent to 7.2 billion dirhams ($1.96 billion) from 6.8 billion dirhams ($1.85 billion) and the non-oil industry by 8.2 per cent to 11.8 billion dirhams ($3.21 billion) from around 11.2 billion dirhams ($3.05 billion), the study said.

The construction sector surged by 9.8 per cent while there was a similar growth in trade.

Iraqi dinar firms on dollar on U.N. oil deal hopes

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq's central bank has set a higher conversion rate for the dinar currency to reflect growing optimism in Baghdad that Iraq will soon be able to sell oil again on world markets.

Banking sources in Baghdad said Saturday the dinar was set at 500 from 700 to the dollar in the third revaluation in a week.

Money changers were offering an even higher rate for the Iraqi currency, quoting it at 460 to the dollar.

The dinar, which has fallen steadily since the United Nations imposed sanctions in 1990, jumped in value last month on news Iraq may agree to deal with the U.N. to sell limited amounts of oil to buy humanitarian supplies.

The dinar was trading at 3,000 to the dollar before news of the oil talks, which start next week in New York.

The rise in the dinar has slashed shop prices in Iraq as dollar-denominated imports have become cheaper to buy.

A saloon car, for example, is selling for less than two million dinars compared with 20 million early last month.

Traders also said essential items like sugar, rice, eggs and flour were costing at least 75 per cent less than they did three weeks ago.

Iraq's government-controlled press talks of a "shining sun rising again," a reference to an end to the hardship caused by the U.N. embargo imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The newspapers are claiming victory over the U.N. embargo and heaping praise on President Saddam Hussein for bringing "the greatest happiness" to the Iraqi people.

"Here you are compensating your people with ample joy by dismantling the chains of the embargo," declared Babel newspaper, owned by Saddam's eldest son Uday.

Preachers in Baghdad drove the same message home in their sermons Friday.

Addressing packed mosques in the capital, their speeches were full of thanks and praise for Saddam for beating the embargo.

There has been no word from any senior Iraqi official, however, that Baghdad would accept any of the terms the United Nations will demand are met before a resumption of oil sales.

But this has not deterred Iraqis from selling their dollars and going on a shopping binge.

State bank employees, forced to work late into the night to cope with the surge in business, speak of millions of dollars being exchanged by Iraqis for their own currency.

U.N. official wants more cash for Africa

LONDON (R) — A leading U.N. development official pleaded Friday for more cash for aid projects and peacekeeping in Africa, saying that otherwise much of the continent could be condemned to eternal poverty.

"I think the international community should give Africa a higher priority... it's extremely important for development aid to be expanded and not contracted," said James Speth, head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Ther UNDP has offices in 136 countries and gives most of its approximately $1 billion core funds to the 50 countries that are home to 75 per cent of the world's poorest people, most of whom live in Africa.

Indian reforms slow down

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's high-profile free-market reforms have been put on the back burner in the run-up to general elections, with the government fearful of antagonising an electorate used to decades of subsidies.

Industrialists and government officials say the reforms are on hold, and no major economic decision can be expected until the polls held once every five years take place as expected in April.

"The pace of reforms has definitely slowed down because of the elections," said V.P. Srivastava, spokesman of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

"The reforms have come to a standstill," asserted Pinkai Das, an assistant manager in the state-run Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India.

Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, the architect of the economic turnaround, admitted candidly last month that the much-publicised disinvestment of public sector companies would not be possible before the ballot.

He ruled out the possibility of doing away with subsidies, and said recurring demands by industrial houses for reforms of hiring-and-firing practices would also have to wait until after the bustings.

"This being an election year, the entire reform process has been going slow," said Rahul Bajaj, chairman and managing director of Bajaj Auto, India's largest scooter-maker. "(It is) quite understandable."

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao unleashed economic reforms after taking office in June 1991.

The liberalisation received enthusiastic support from abroad, but within the country political parties and powerful trade unions have voiced dissent.

And although the reforms have received explicit and implicit approval from state governments controlled by anti-Rao parties, there are still hiccups over their pace

Despite claiming the support of the masses for his reforms, Mr. Rao has led his Congress (I) Party to one stunning defeat after another in state elections over the past two years.

Mr. Rao has put on hold promised sweeping changes in the banking and insurance sectors, labour reforms, slowed down restructuring and privatisation of public sector companies, and refused to slash subsidies on food and fertilisers.

"While most reform programmes around the world slow down before elections, we haven't just slowed them down (but) we've stopped and in some cases reversed reforms," complained Charan Wadhva of the Centre for Policy Research.

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



"Pepperoni on half, mushrooms on half, and one slice with catnip instead of oregano."

JUMBLE® THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

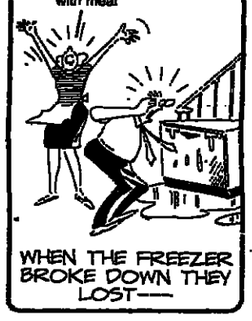
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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here : ○○○○○ ○○○○○

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: BULLY SOGGY YEOMAN BOTTLE
Answer: Some people think a pub is good for this — WHAT ALES YOU

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You can put those fine ideas you had at this time to work and get much accomplished in your present career activities.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Concentrate on getting whatever is needed to make your home more charming and functional. Get your wardrobe in better order.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Have those talks with bigwigs during the daytime today and get excellent results, but avoid disagreements at home later this evening.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Get that plan in operation which can yield you fine benefits early today and be most careful while driving on the highways and byways.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You can advance quickly today both in business and personal affairs so get busy early in the morning and make headway.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Early today study how to add to your present advancement and later in the evening, pursue your aims and desires for being successful.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) It is best you get out to see others at this time and get away from home for awhile and find new interests which are prosperous.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be poised when taking your talents to bigwigs who can help you become more successful and work out personal matters later.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You have excellent ideas today which good friends can assist you to put across, then study your plan for public acceptance.

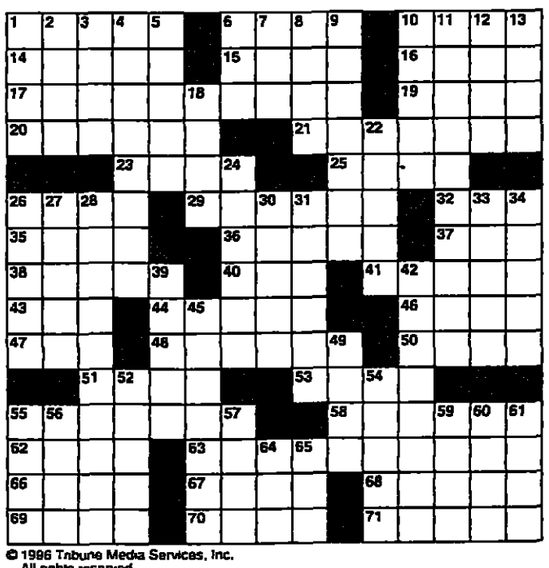
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Go to see a clever person in business today and gain advice on how to become more successful and then be sure to follow it.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a good day today to be out in the business world and meet with worthwhile persons. Your future may be brighter with your efforts later this evening.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Get your vocational experience better placed today so that you can profit more from it, then have a meeting with outside partners.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

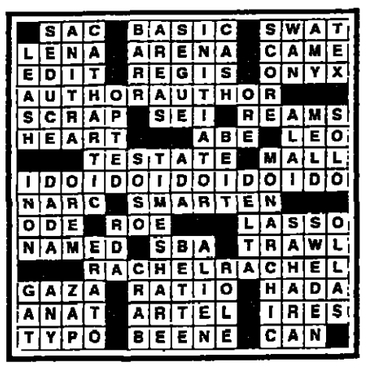
THE Daily Crossword by Virginia Yates



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ACROSS
1 Some seamen
6 Ride the waves
10 False
14 Poplar
15 "— saw Elba"
16 Tops
17 Team asset?
19 Makes a note
20 AEF word
21 Weighs the pros and cons
23 Greek letters
25 Deejay's need
26 Badmouth
29 Touched base
32 Act like Xanthippe
35 — in a while
36 Papas of film
37 Coach Parseghian
38 Foremost
40 Tchrs.' org.
41 Ladder steps
43 Downed
44 Late bloomer
46 El followers
47 Arctic explorer
48 Get the hang of
50 Computer unit
51 Voucher
53 Steep
55 "Hamlet" role
58 XI
62 XII
63 Weather chart feature
66 Cut
67 Astor's quest
68 Dairy items
69 A Fitzgerald
70 Jerk
71 Small sailboats

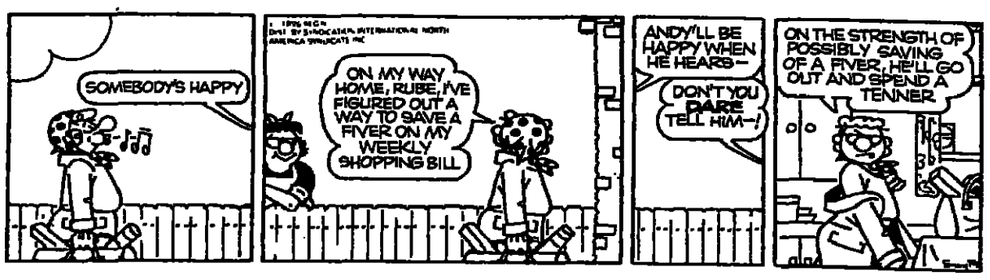
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1 Certain Indian
2 Genesis name
3 Tattle
4 Geometric shapes
5 Monica of tennis
6 Kind of lion or horse
7 Indian bean
8 Oboe, e.g.
9 Alarmists?
10 Pat of "Wheel of Fortune"
11 Folk songfest
12 Chip in
13 — up (bungle)
18 Choose the news
22 Waiter?
24 New Orleans pros
26 Up to now
27 Singer Pointer
28 Night flyer
30 Welcome
31 Adapted to conform
33 Jargon
34 Quebec peninsula
39 Member of a Dravidian people
42 Bumbershoot
45 Fill the bill
49 Stagger
52 Reddish-orange dyestuff
54 Pinchbeck, for one
55 "This one's —"
56 Car group
57 — vitae (brandy)
59 Opinion
60 Organic compound
61 Monster's loch
64 Footed vase
65 "— me no questions..."



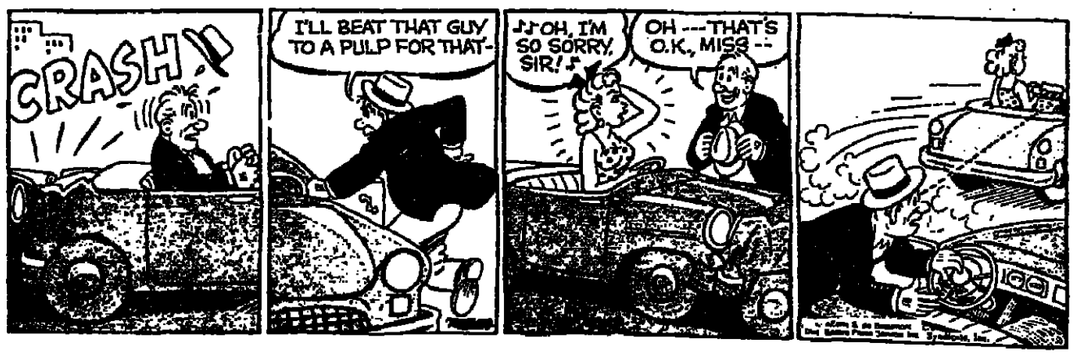
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Apprec
By P.V. Viveka
Jordan Times Staff
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Appreciating Iraqi dinar realises hope of many Jordanians

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The spectacular recovery of the Iraqi dinar in the last three weeks holds out the promise of dramatic profits for hundreds of Jordanians, despite lingering fears over the known unpredictability in Iraqi decision-making, moneychangers said Saturday.

For many, the gains are only of a few thousands, but there are heavyweights whose holdings in Iraqi dinars run into millions.

Whether thousands or millions, the seven- or eight-fold gain of the Iraqi dinar in the last three weeks represents the realisation of a dream for many in Jordan, housewives and bankers as well as expatriate workers included.

A cursory survey of the Jordanian moneychanging scene clearly indicates that not many had heeded an advice from the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) not to speculate in currency after a bitter experience with the Iraqi dinar almost three years ago.

There is no blanket law against Jordanians holding foreign currency although there are provisions that could be used by the Central Bank to dissuade speculation.

Some of the investors in Iraqi dinars have already unloaded their investment with relatively moderate gains, while others are holding out, hoping to reap fortunes when Iraq actually accepts an oil deal with the U.N.

"I have been waiting for more than two years and had actually written off my JD 1,000 investment in Iraqi dinars," said a downtown grocer. "Now I can afford to wait for a few weeks more."

One Jordanian dinar fetched up to 4,000 Iraqi dinars on Feb. 17, one day before Iraq announced it was ready to discuss the U.N. offer for limited oil sales of $2 billion worth every six months.

The plunge started 24 hours later, and in about 10 days the rate was 1,500 Iraqi dinars to the Jordanian dinar in one of the most dramatic recoveries that any currency staged.

On Saturday, the rate was 700 Iraqi dinars to a Jordanian dinar, with hopes remaining high that the Iraqi currency would gain further strength as Iraq and U.N. open talks on Feb. 6 on the oil sale offer.

Adding further optimism was a move by the Central Bank of Iraq on Saturday to set the dinar at 500 from 700 to the dollar in the third revaluation in a week. The actual rate in the Baghdad market was around 460 dinars to the dollar.

Many speculators, wary of any Iraqi move to cancel or replace the currency in circulation, have already moved their holdings to Baghdad lest the Iraqi government would announce all Iraqi banknotes outside the country null and void.

"There is a considerable amount of Iraqi dinars available in Jordan although there is no precise estimate," said Mutie Kabariti, head of the Jordanian Moneychangers Association.

"But the amount of Iraqi dinars held in Iraq by Jordanians is much higher," he said. Such a practice was prompted by fears that Baghdad might replace the currency and limit any offer to change the banknotes to those within Iraq, said Mr. Kabariti.

Many Jordanian speculators and businessmen were believed to have lost up to $100 million in 1994, when the Iraqi government replaced part of its currency. Baghdad allowed the exchange of banknotes in circulation within the country for new currency, but closed off the borders to prevent the entry of the cancelled banknotes for three days.

Frustrated speculators even burnt their Iraqi dinars by the thousands in downtown Amman when the deadline expired and many of them vowed never to touch the currency again since what they had lost already represented a fortune.

At least two Jordanians reportedly committed suicide because they had lost all they possessed and two others died of shock because of the loss.

Many others who were holding valid Iraqi currency then were encouraged to dump their investment lest those banknotes would be also be declared null and void. But most of them hung on, and they now believe their bet is about to pay off.

"I'm holding on to my two million Iraqi dinars until the price comes down to around 100 dinars to a dollar," said Marwan, a Jordanian officeworker. "It might even go further down, but I won't be taking any chances beyond the 100-dinar mark."

Given that his investment, some two years ago, was around JD 1,000 for two million Iraqi dinars, Marwan would gain a neat JD 3,000 if he were to sell today. But if hopes for a further strengthening of the dinar come true, a small fortune — JD 19,000 — is in the offing for Marwan whose take-home pay is about JD 220 a month.

There are some who are hoping that the exchange rate for the dinar could eventually settle down to somewhere near the pre-crisis level of three or four to the dollar.

That's when overnight millionaires would be made in Jordan.

All dreams and hopes of those holding Iraqi currency in Jordan could be shattered if the Iraqi government opts to invalidate the currency, a possibility being discussed but optimistically discounted by most.

Luai Alami, of the Alami Exchange Company, said "there are rumours that the Iraqi government might cancel the currency, but there is also a strong belief that it would not do so."

"As far as what we have heard, there is no truth to such rumours," added Mr. Alami.

Mr. Kabariti also said he believed there would not be any such cancellation. "The currency is gaining strength, and so there is no reason for the government to cancel anything."

But not all share that optimism. "We've heard that the Iraqi government is printing 5,000-dinar notes," said Qasem, who owns a small cafe in Amman. "Why should they print such currency if the intention is not to replace the existing banknotes?"

"I've already sold what I had and gained JD 2,000," said Qasem.

Sawsan, a housewife, says she is facing a dilemma. "Should I sell now or wait for better returns a few days later," she said. "The risk is that Iraq may simply declare the currency invalid; then I'd lose everything.

"But I don't want to blame myself for selling now with less profits than a few weeks later when the strength of the dinar could be really something."

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

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UNOFFICIAL MARKET TRADE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 03/02/1996

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC.	620	1448810	233.500	233.500
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	477	1700	3.600	3.573
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	9730	25750	2.650	2.650
THE ARAB JORDANIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK	3100	8288	2.680	2.670
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/NEW	622	1663	2.685	2.670
THE HOUSING BANK	6050	16316	2.700	2.700
JORDAN FUND ... LTD	1331	3640	2.740	2.740
JORDAN GULF BANK	36900	97062	2.630	2.630
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	21561	89695	3.750	3.750
ARAB FINANCIERS INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	460	1373	3.150	3.050
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	1250	4978	3.840	3.840
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	47937	66071	1.320	1.320
BANKS SECTOR	130916	395837	INDEX NUMBER: CHANGE:	185.90 -0.4...
JORDAN NEW INSURANCE	14907	25628	1.690	1.720
ARAB GULF INSURANCE	111	326	2.750	2.750
INSURANCE SECTOR	15018	25954	INDEX NUMBER: CHANGE:	129.49 -0.37
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	25272	45812	1.790	1.790
... INVESTMENT	1000	950	.950	.950
... INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	2011	2129	1.060	1.060
MACHINERY EQUIP. RENTING & MAINTENANCE	1562	1116	.720	.720
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & DEVELOPMENT HOTELS	1350	2874	2.130	2.130
ARAB ... FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	1051	1744	1.660	1.660
ZARKA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	1107	1107	1.000	1.000
UNIFIED CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	26700	50760	1.900	1.900
SERVICES SECTOR	64523	131341	INDEX NUMBER: CHANGE:	125.72 0....
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	38297	142729	3.700	3.690
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	13584	36771	2.700	2.730
THE ARAB POTASH	2.0	1110	5.550	5.550
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	545	5395	9.770	9.900
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	54	405	7.500	7.500
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	1400	6351	4.530	4.465
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	1.000	73070	6.100	6.170
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	10500	23620	2.250	2.240
PAPER INDUSTRIES	2400	5040	2.100	2.100
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVEST MENT	2368	17286	7.300	7.300
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	1000	1000	5.450	5.450
EXPLOITATION & POTASH	23560	12953	.550	.550
ARAB ... CONVERTING & TRADING	450	364	1.090	1.090
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	400	392	.980	.980
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	200	138	1.370	1.380
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	980	1625	3.400	3.750
JORDAN ...	500	600	1.200	1.200
ARAB ... FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	600	900	1.500	1.500
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	2150	7513	3.080	3.670
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	3342	8164	1.820	1.840
JORDAN NEW ...	4.0	5817	1.450	1.450
AL DAY PEARL WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	1875	4125	2.193	2.200
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	4251	6813	1.360	1.370
... SECTOR	120569	306611	INDEX NUMBER: CHANGE:	122.84 +0.11
GRAND TOTAL	330939	939539	INDEX NUMBER: CHANGE:	154.40 -0.047

NO. OF TRADES SHARES IN OFFICIAL MARKET : 122231
VALUE TRADED ON PARALLEL MARKET : 137438

Industrial Development Bank boosts net profit to JD 4.8 million

AMMAN (Petra) — The Industrial Development Bank (IDB) last year posted a net profit on its operations amounting to JD 4.8 million compared to JD 2.2 million in 1994 registering an increase of 118 per cent, according to an IDB report released Saturday.

The increase in profits came from revenues which amounted to JD 7.3 million in 1995 compared to JD 4.7 million in the previous year and also as a result of the bank's policy of rationalising spending and reducing expenses from JD 2.2 million in 1994 to JD 1.9 million in 1995, said the report.

The IDB's total assets rose last year to reach JD 135 million compared to JD 124 million at a time when the volume of credit to industrial and tourism projects also rose last year to be around JD 101 million compared to JD 91 million in the previous year, the report said.

The shareholders' net equity rose to JD 28 million compared to JD 16 million at the end of 1994, registering an increase of 75 per cent, added the report, which noted that in the past year the bank conducted feasibility studies on various areas with investment potential, like leather, engine cylinders, readymade garments, and is placing the outcome of the studies under the investors' disposal.

Under a special agreement between Jordan and Germany, the IDB will be receiving nearly JD 2.5 million loan to be relent to industrial businesses in Jordan to finance the installation of equipment and to reduce pollution to the environment.

BUSINESS

A review of news from the Arabic press

Mahasneh: Israeli ports not feasible for transporting goods to Jordan

☆☆ ALTHOUGH FREIGHT charges from Israeli ports to Europe are low, the overall transportation cost from these ports are much higher than shipping fees from Aqaba, Ports Corporation Director-General Dureid Mahasneh has said. He explained that congestion at the Israeli ports, security measures imposed by the authorities and the difficulty to transport goods via Sheikh Hussein Bridge make shipping from the port of Haifa not feasible. Dr. Mahasneh said the corporation was considering large cuts on shipping charges on goods destined for Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Dr. Mahasneh will head a Jordanian delegation to Cairo this week to hold negotiations with the Suez Canal Authority that might result in a 50 per cent reduction of fees on goods and vessels crossing the canal towards Aqaba. Jordan and Egypt have previously agreed on a 20 per cent reduction of fees but this cut is not sufficient in light of practical steps in the peace process and the emergence of Israeli ports as a real competitor for Arab ports including Aqaba and the Suez Canal.

An official source said that the Suez Canal Authority had reduced the fees on Jordanian goods but a decision has not been issued by the Cabinet concerning similar reductions on fees at Aqaba port. A decision might be issued shortly after resolving some difficulties raised by the Ministry of Finance, the source added.

Dr. Mahasneh revealed that the government will soon be taking major steps to raise the efficiency at the Aqaba port to be able to compete with Israeli ports as both countries start implementing the peace process. He indicated that the Aqaba port will enter a new stage as recommended by a Japanese study which proposed raising the productivity capacity and expanding the containers' port and the industrial port. Dr. Mahasneh denied that there is an intention to limit Aqaba to bulk cargo (Al Ra'i).

"Call-back" telephone system is forbidden

☆☆ THE COMMISSION for organising the telecommunications sector is launching a campaign on traders and companies using the "call-back" system. The commission has asked the Department of Income Tax not to deduct or accept the "call-back" telephone bills as expenses because this type of telepohone calls is banned by law. A special committee has been formed to crack down on all those who use this systems by disconnecting their telephones and sending the violators to courts (Al Ra'i).

Governor closes 14 coffee shops for allowing 'immoral' practices

☆☆ FOURTEEN COFFEE shops were ordered closed by the Amman governor for "immoral" practices incompatible with respect for the month of Ramadan. According to informed sources the inspection campaign on coffee shops allowed to open after iftar is continuing. Coffee shops can hire lute player and provide hubble-bubble on condition that no violations, such as singing or dancing, occur. Violations have been found and the owners of these coffee shops were detained.

Meanwhile, campaigns are continuing to ensure that all liquor shops and entertainemnt clubs which serve alcohol remain closed until the end of Ramadan.

Al Dustour to give 25% in dividend

☆☆ THE JORDAN Press and Publishing Company, which issues the Arabic daily Al Dustour, will distribute 25 per cent in dividend for fiscal 1995 and the remaining amount of net profits for the year will be transferred to retained earnings. The company expects 1996 to be financially more rewarding as, under the new income tax law, Al Dustour will be paying 15 per cent tax on net profit and not 38 per cent as previous years (Al Dustour).

JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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Financial Markets

Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

Eurocurrency Interest Rates — Date: 3/2/1996

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.12	5.06	4.93	4.81
Sterling Pound	6.00	6.00	5.93	5.87
Deutsche Mark	3.12	3.06	3.00	2.87
Swiss Franc	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.56
French Franc	3.93	3.93	3.93	3.93
Japanese Yen	0.24	0.31	0.37	0.43
European Currency Unit	4.62	4.43	4.46	4.41

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin — Date: 3/2/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7089	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0791	1.0845
Deutsche Mark	0.4778	0.4802
Swiss Franc	0.5816	0.5845
French Franc	0.1390	0.1397
Japanese Yen*	0.6651	0.6684
Dutch Guilder	0.4259	0.4280
Swedish Krona		
Italian Lira*	0.0450	0.0452
Belgian Franc		

* Per 100

Other Currencies — Date: 3/2/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8780
Lebanese Lira*	0.04475	0.04465
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1898
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2180
Omani Riyal	1.8830	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1935
Greek Drachma*	0.2775	0.5125
Cypriot Pound	1.4865	1.5385

Magic Vs Michael a sideshow as Pippen leads Bulls past Lakers

INGLEWOOD, California (R) — It was hyped as Magic versus Michael, but Scottie Pippen stole the show.

Pippen scored 30 points and Dennis Rodman grabbed a season-high 23 rebounds as the Chicago Bulls routed the Los Angeles Lakers 99-84 Friday for their 18th straight win.

The matchup between Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan — facing each other for the first time since the 1991 NBA finals — never materialised.

Johnson, in his second game back after 4½ years off due to his infection with the AIDS virus, had just 15 points in 32 minutes, while Jordan, the NBA's scoring leader at better than 30 points per game, had just 17 points.

"It was great," said Pippen. "I knew the whole game would be built up around Michael and Magic and it'd give me the opportunity to put on my own little show on the side."

The Bulls, who led by as many as 26 points, set a franchise record with their ninth straight road win and at 41-3 improved the best three-loss mark in league history.

Johnson didn't have nearly the success he did against the defenceless Golden State Warriors in his return Tuesday, when he had 19 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds.

Rodman outrebounded the entire Lakers team for much of the game and added 10 points, mostly on follow shots. Chicago held a 43-29 edge in rebounds.

The Bulls, without starting centre Luc Longley and swingman Toni Kukoc, got a boost from their backup centres as James Edwards scored 12 points and Bill Wennington added 11. Lakers centre Vlade Divac scored just two points.

In Cleveland, Chris Mills scored 23 points and Danny Ferry 22 as the Cavaliers tied an NBA record with 10 three-pointers in the first half in an easy 107-85 win over the Phoenix Suns.

Charles Barkley and Kevin Johnson each had 15 points for Phoenix, now 4-3 on its 13-day, eight-game road trip.

Phoenix forward Danny Manning, playing his first game in nearly a year after knee surgery, finished with 10 points and three blocks in 26 minutes.

In Orlando, Shaquille O'Neal scored 25 points as the Magic remained perfect at home with a 108-95 victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

Orlando improved to 23-0 at home and has won 30 straight home games since last March 14. The Magic also extended their home winning streak against Eastern Conference opponents to 45 games.

Stacey Augmon scored 21 points for Atlanta, which has lost three straight since having a 10-game winning streak snapped.

In San Antonio, David Robinson scored 21 points and Chuck Person hit two three-pointers in the final 2:36 as the Spurs pulled away for a 101-90 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Sean Elliott added 20 points for San Antonio, which has won three straight and improved to 18-5 at home this season.

Isaiah Rider scored 20 points for Minnesota, which was outscored 14-2 in the final 2:36.

At Utah, Karl Malone recorded his first triple double in a 10-year career and John Stockton had a season-high 31 points and 11 assists as the Jazz defeated the Los Angeles Clippers 122-113 for their fourth consecutive victory.

Malone had 27 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists for the Jazz. Jeff Hornacek added 27 points.

Terry Dehere scored 31 points to lead the Clippers, who have lost four straight and eight of their last nine.

At Washington, Juwan Howard had 26 points and eight rebounds and Calbert Cheaney added 23 points as the Bullets beat the Portland Trail Blazers 113-97 for their third straight victory.

Gheorghe Muresan added 21 points and 16 rebounds as the Bullets got their fourth consecutive home win. Washington played without forward Chris Webber, who underwent season-ending surgery on his left shoulder Thursday.

Rod Strickland scored 20 points and Clifford Robinson 19 as the Blazers lost their third straight.

At Indiana, Rik Smits scored 31 points and Reggie Miller 21 as the Pacers extended their franchise-record home winning streak to 15 games with a 116-108 win over the Boston Celtics.

Todd Day scored 22 points and Dana Barros 19 for Boston, which has lost six of seven. Indiana has won eight of nine.

At Golden State, Joe Smith scored 28 points as the Warriors held off the Toronto Raptors 114-111, salvaging a split of the season series. Golden State won for the third time in nine games.

Damon Stoudamire scored 25 points for Toronto, which has lost four in a row and fell to 2-19 on the road.

In Vancouver, Armon Gilliam had 29 points and 10 rebounds as the New Jersey Nets handed the Grizzlies their fourth straight loss, 93-84 in the first meeting between the teams.

Byron Scott scored 27 points to lead Vancouver.



The Chicago Bulls Michaeli Jordan (23) and the Los Angeles Lakers Magic Johnson renew their rivalry since Johnson returned to the Lakers, after retiring when he tested positive for the HIV virus. The Bulls beat the Lakers, 99-84 (Reuters photo)



The Los Angeles Lakers Magic Johnson (right) and the Chicago Bulls Michael Jordan (left) walk off court together after their NBA game in Inglewood, California (Reuters photo)

RESULTS

Indiana	116	Boston	108
Orlando	108	Atlanta	95
Washington	113	Portland	97
Cleveland	107	Phoenix	85
San Antonio	101	Minnesota	90
Utah	122	LA Clippers	113
New Jersey	93	Vancouver	84
Golden State	114	Toronto	111
Chicago	99	LA Lakers	84

Singapore bodybuilder shocked by life ban

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Asia's top woman bodybuilder, Jojo Sinclair of Singapore, has again denied using banned muscle-enhancing drugs despite the surprise disclosure that a life ban imposed on her followed three positive tests for steroid use.

"I've never taken drugs and I never will," Sinclair was quoted as saying by news reports Saturday after the International Federation of BodyBuilders (IFBB), the sport's governing body, imposed the harshest possible punishment.

The ban was imposed after two urine tests revealed she had taken the banned muscle-enhancing drug Stanazolol at the world championships three months ago in Belgium where she won the 52-kilogram (114-pound) lightweight crown.

Sinclair, 44, has been ordered to return her gold medal to the IFBB headquarters in Montreal, Canada, and was given two weeks to appeal to the body for a final evaluation and investigation on the matter.

She also faces the loss of potentially lucrative sponsorships.

What shocked sporting circles here was an IFBB revelation that this was not the first time — as had previously been assumed — that Sinclair had tested positive for steriod usage.

The local bodybuilding federation released a statement from the IFBB which stated Sinclair had first tested positive for the steriod Nandrolone at the World Games in The Hague, Holland, where she emerged runner-up.

Her medal was subsequently forfeited and the IFBB issued her a warning.

But she again tested positive for the use of Mandrolone at the World women's and mixed pairs' championships in Warsaw, Poland, four months later, the statement said, and the federation banned Sinclair for a year from November 27, 1993.

Sinclair had explained her absence during that period by saying she wanted to devote more time to her family, news reports said.

Her lawyer, Edmond Pereira, said Sinclair was notified of the ban by the world body through the Singapore Bodybuilders' Federation.

"She was shocked to read the contents of the letter and even more shocked to read the allegations that she had tested positive twice for drug usage in 1993," the statement said.

When asked whether she did return the medal after the 1993 Holland Games as claimed by the IFBB, Pereira was quoted by The Straits Times daily as saying: "She would rather not comment at this time."

Sinclair said she would appeal against the lifetime ban as well as the urine testing procedures adopted at the world meet in Belgium.

Sinclair's latest affair has also landed the Singapore bodybuilders' federation in trouble.

Besides a $4,000 fine, the Singapore body also received a one-year national team disqualification from all IFBB-sanctioned events — such as the Asian and world championships — with effect from November 16, 1995.

IOC's top medical official wants flexible bans

LONDON (AP) — At a time when sports federations are taking a tougher line on doping sanctions, the Olympics' top medical official is calling for a softer approach.

Prince Alexandre de Merode, chairman of the IOC medical commission, says automatic two-year and four-year drug bans are too severe and should be replaced by a more flexible system of penalties.

De Merode's comments signal a turnaround in the policy of the International Olympic Committee, whose won guidelines suggest a two-year suspension for a first performance-enhancing drug offense and life ban for a second.

The IOC has been at the forefront of a campaign to harmonise anti-doping rules, procedures and sanctions among all international sports federations. But achieving a unified front has proved elusive, if not impossible.

For instance:

☆ The International Weightlifting Federation, seeking to clean up the sport's reputation for doping scandals, has an automatic life ban for first-time offenders.

☆ The International Amateur Athletic Federation, governing body of athletics, rejected proposals last year to adopt two-year suspensions and upheld its automatic four-year ban for athletes testing positive for performance-enhancing drugs for the first time.

☆ Under pressure to get tough following a series of Chinese doping scandals, the International Swimming Federation FINA recently doubled its sanctions from two years to four years.

Athletics and swimming, two of the biggest Olympic sports, are now out of line with the IOC's medical code.

"I think it's a mistake," De Merode said in a telephone interview. "These decisions were taken by people without experience in doping, by delegates from far away. They have the impression that giving tough penalties will stop the problem. Instead it will multiply the problems."

De Merode said he will make his new proposals at a meeting of the IOC doping sub-commission on Feb. 24-25.

"I will propose a system based on flexibility without fixed sanctions," he said. "We need a scale of sanctions that are realistic and can be applied. Each case is different. The responsibilities are different. We must have a good balance with reality."

De Merode proposes a two-year sanction that involves a six-month ban from all competition, followed by six months of limited eligibility for certain events and then a one-year probation period with regular doping checks.

"De Merode, a Belgian who is an IOC vice-president, said total two- and four-year bans have proven impossible to uphold in national courts in some coutries.

"If they are not applicable, it's ridiculous to have such sanctions," he said. "Facing the court we will lose every time. We must have rules that can be accepted by the court. If we don't, we will lose regularly and we will also lose the battle."

Increasingly, athletes have turned to litigation to challenge positive test results and doping suspensions. In one of the higher-profile cases, Germany's former world champion sprinter Katrin Krabbe is seeking more than half a million dollars in lost earnings from the IAAF and German federation over a doping ban that ended her career.

De Merode said doping sanctions should not rob athletes of their livelihood but allow them the chance to resume their careers once they have served their punishment.

"We acknowledge that athletes have a job," De Merode said. "You can't say to someone: you lose your job.' There should be a second-level of sanctions that are not so high but are strong enough so that you can continue practising."

De Merode cited the injustice of the current system.

"If I kill somebody and I have a good lawyer, I can get out after only one or two years," he said. "If an athlete takes a small pill, he can be banned for life."



Prince Alexandre de Merode, chairman of the medical commission of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) seen during an interview in Brussels (Reuters photo)

Williams declines comment over manslaughter charges

WOKING, England (AP) — Williams Formula One officials declined comment on reports that manslaughter charges were about to be filed against the team's top two officials in the death of Grand Prix superstar Ayrton Senna.

The Brazilian driver was killed May 1, 1994.

Italian investigating magistrate Maurizio Passarini has also been studying evidence in the death of Simtek Formula One driver Roland Ratzenberger, who was killed in qualifying 24 hours earlier.

Officials sue to keep Seahawks

SEATTLE (AFP) — Area officials went to court here Friday to stop the National Football League Seahawks from flying off to Los Angeles in the league's fifth franchise move within a year.

Officials filed suit against team owner Ken Behring and sought a restraining order to prevent a move to Southern California, most likely to play in the Pasadena Rose Bowl until a planned new stadium is built.

"It is time to stop the madness in the National Football League," King County executive Gary Locke said. "This madness of franchise relocation in the NFL has got to stop. We will take every legal action necessary."

The Cleveland Browns face a similar suit from their home city over owner Art modell's plan to relocate the club to Baltimore. Pressure also faces the Houston Oilers over plans to move to Nashville, Tennessee.

This wave of "move to the highest bidder" relocations was touched off last year when two clubs departed Los Angeles, the Raiders for their former home in Oakland and the Rams for St. Louis.

"LA is just not a football town," Seattle tight end Trey Junkin said. "Ask the Rams and Raiders why they left. One of the reasons is nobody cares. Traditionally they have never been a big football town."

But tradition is a losing hand in the free agency switches where owners seek not just profitability, but the greatest potential profitability, and some cities are bending over backwards to oblige them.

One bit of tradition might survive even if the club leaves. Behring said he plans to leave the team logo, nickname, uniform and colors behind in case the city should wish to use them for a possible later club.

That also ensures huge income for Behring through the sale of new souvenirs, clothing and other items bearing the new nickname, logo and colors of the relocated franchis.

Behring reportedly plans to set up offices in Anaheim and explore four potential stadium sites nearby, with plans to build an adjacent theme park with an American football theme.

Carl Lewis gears up for final year

HOUSTON (AP) — Carl Lewis has won many races during his brilliant track and field career. Now he's headed toward the finish line.

Lewis, who will be 35 on July 1, says this year will be his last Olympic Games. He won't be in Greece for the 1997 World Championships or in Australia for the 2000 Olympics.

"No Athens, no Sydney," he said.

On Saturday, Lewis, winner of nine Olympic gold medals and nine world championship gold medals, will face some of the world's best sprinters, including world outdoor record-holder Leroy Burrell and Olympic 200-metre champion Mike Marsh, in the 60 metres at the gallery furniture games at the University of Houston.

In the race, Lewis will be looking for indications of how he'll do while trying for his final Olympic team.

"It will show me where I am in terms of my start and the first part of my 100 (metres)," said. "I still have my speed — the first 30 metres is where I was getting killed last year."

Last season was the first time since high school that Lewis failed to rank among the world's top 10 in the 100. His No. 7 ranking in the long jump was his lowest since high school.

After several months of weight training and other conditioning, Lewis figures he has improved his body strength by 40 per cent over last year. He weighs 185 pounds, close to the 179 he weighed when he set the then-100 world record of 9.86 seconds in 1991.

Following the Houston meet, Lewis' first indoor meet since 1992, Lewis plans to run the 60 metres next month at the U.S. indoor championships at Atlanta.

As his lengthy career winds down — he made his first Olympic team in 1980 at age 19 — Lewis said longevity is among his proudest accomplishments.

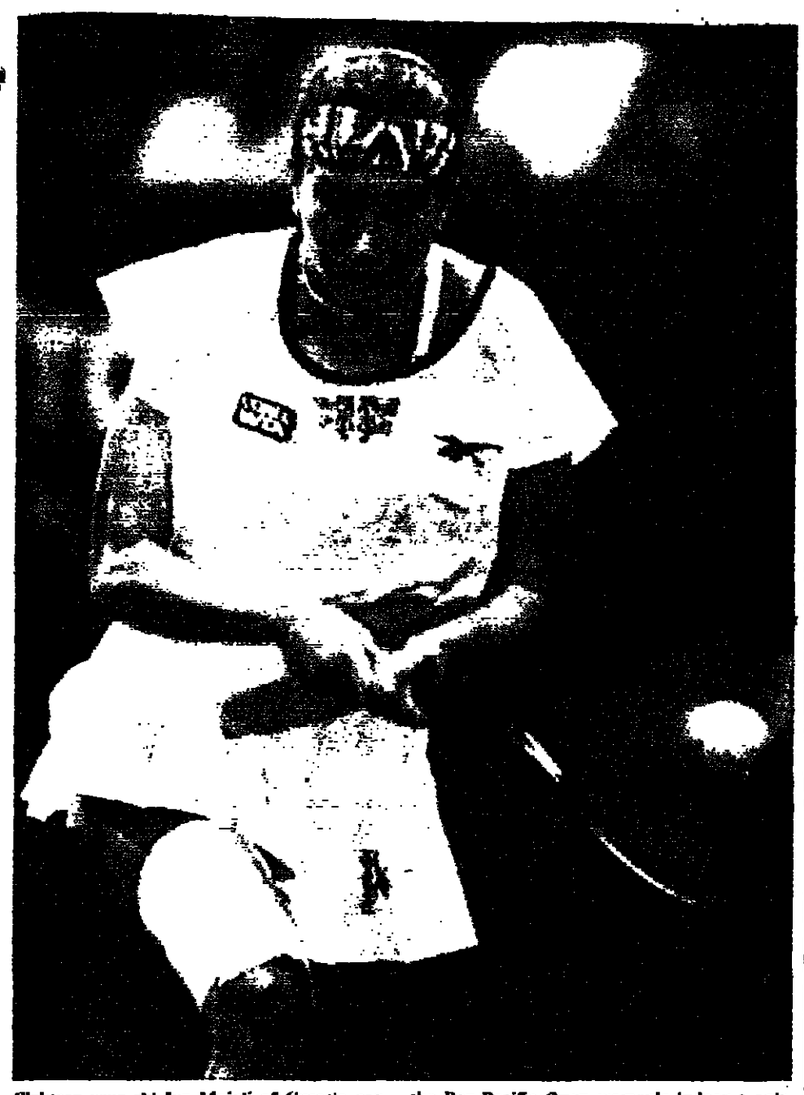
"I hope that in 10 years from now, longevity is the norm and now the exception, that people will say, 'he did it, and I can do it, too.'" he said.

Lewis is the only three-time winner of the Olympic long jump. He also owns the world indoor record, 28 feet, 10 1-4 (8.79 metres), which he set at the 1984 Millrose Games in New York. But he has never gotten the record he wants most — the world outdoor long jump mark.

Mike Powell broke Bob Beamon's 23-year-old record of 29-2, 1-2 (8.90 metres) with a leap of 29-4, 1-2 (8.95 metres) at the 1991 World Championships at Tokyo.



Canadian Donovan Bailey (left) beats Canada's Bruny Surin (3), the USA's Henry Neal and the USA's Tim Hardin in the men's 60 metre dash at the Millrose Games at New York's Madison Square Garden (Reuters photo)



Eighteen-year-old Iva Majoli of Croatia concentrates as she makes a return to Swiss opponent Martina Hingis during a semifinal of the Pan-Pacific Open women's indoor tennis tournament in Tokyo (Reuters photo)

Asian Games to proceed on expensive snow

BEIJING (AP) — The Winter Asian Games, opening Sunday with skiers and skaters from 17 nations, is running up an expensive bill for snow, China's official news agency says.

The area of northeast China serving as host for Asia's version of the Winter Olympics has had little snow in the last two months, and organisers have paid local farmers 200,000 yuan ($25,000) to carry artificially made snow up to Alpine and cross-country ski courses, the Xinhua news agency reported Saturday.

"This problem will be solved soon and it won't hurt the games," Xinhua quoted Liu Haiyun, general secretary of the organising committee, as saying.

Farmers were carrying up bags of artificial snow from the freestyle ski and ski jumping areas, it added.

More than 500 athletes are competing in the games, centered in Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang province, 1,000 kilometres (625 miles) northeast of Beijing. Ski events are being held in Yabuli, 200 kilometres (125 miles) to the southeast.

Kazakhstan, Kuwait and Thailand are making their debut in the Winter Asian Games, being held for only the third time.

Kazakhstan is expected to be a top medal contender. Kuwait is sending just one Alpine skier, and Thailand is sending a figure skater to compete in a field that includes women's world champion Chen Lu of China.

The games previously were held in Sapporo, Japan, in 1986 and 1990. North Korea had been scheduled to serve as host in 1994, but withdraw.

1st Division Basketball Championship

Orthodoxi overcome Jazireh 85-75

By Aleen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — In order to keep their title bid alive Al Orthodoxi needed to win Friday night. And that was what they did.

Al Orthodoxi beat Al Jazireh 85-75 in their second round match and will now await their all-time rivals Al Ahli whom they must defeat to force a playoff for the title. This is provided both teams win the rest of their matches.

Al Orthodoxi's win was crucial for the team who had dominated the game from 1976-1989. Had they lost to Al Jazireh they would have finished third for the first time.

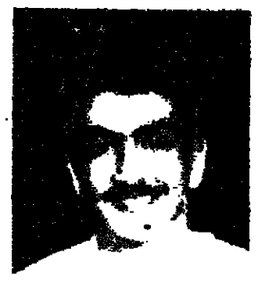
It was probably with that fact in mind that Al Orthodoxi turned their first half 42-35 defeat to a 10-point victory. It was undoubtedly because of that pressure too that Al Jazireh's players probably fumbled in the second half and eventually conceded the match.

Al Jazireh, a second division team only a decade ago, had scored the tournament's major surprise defeating titleholders Al Ahli 76-73 in the first round.

Their win over Al Orthodoxi would have given them second place for the first time, but that ambition has been put on hold for this season.

Al Orthodoxi who lost to Al Ahli 90-76 in the first round final now have a clear path before their must-win Feb. 15 final against Al Ahli.

However, Al Ahli's players who watched Friday night's match alongside over 200 fans were definitely not disturbed by their rival's form.



Ghaith Ennabi



Mahmoud Sha'ban

Al Orthodoxi were in an unenviable form in the first half. Although promising player Mahmoud Sha'ban netted 11 points, his teammates committed a high number of mistakes which Al Jazireh's agile players like Yousef Abu Baker and Saqer Khirfan converted through fast-breaks to take a 20-14 lead.

Most of Al Orthodoxi's players, with the exception of Muntaser Abultayyeb, also lacked effective finishing and rebounding and only tried to catch up throughout the first half.

The game's and Al Jazireh's top scorer Hussam Lutfi netted a first half-high 14 points and together with teammates Ihab Qaddoumi and Iyad Jamal took their team's lead from 30-22 to 36-26.

Al Jazireh lost a number of chances to build a bigger lead as they seemed content with ending the first half 42-35.

The second half was the exact opposite of the first for both teams. It was Al Jazireh who completely lacked the rebounding and scoring as Al Orthodoxi outscored Al Jazireh 50-33 to win the match.

Al Orthodoxi veteran Hilal Barakat who was held to an unusually-low six points in the first half saved his team by scoring 15 points and burdening al Jazireh with many fouls that hampered their usual scoring.

Al Orthodoxi then played a well-knit defence that limited Al Jazireh's offence. Yousef Abu Baker and Saqer Khirfan only scored two points each leaving Husam Lutfi and Ghaith Ennabi to carry the burden of scoring.

Al Jazireh led until the 5th minute when a three-pointer by Sha'ban and two points by Jan Sahlieh gave Al Orthodoxi a 50-48 lead. Al Jazirh lost the efforts of key centre Ma'an Odeh whom the team greatly depended on in rebounding.

Al Jazireh took the lead for the last time at 58-54. From then on Al Orthodoxi greatly outscored their opponents as Barakat and Sahlieh scored 21 of the next 31 points from free throws and three-pointers to seal their team's precious win.

The game's scorers were:

☆ Al Jazireh: Husam Lutfi 24, Ghaith Ennabi 15, Ihab Qaddoumi 11, Iyad Jamal 9, Yousef Abu Baker 8, Saqer Khirfan 6, Munir Barakat 2.

☆ Al Orthodoxi: Hilal Barakat 21, Jan Sahlieh 17, Muntaser Abultayyeb 16, Mahmoud Shaban 16, Ziyad Nabulsi 6, Samer Nader 4, Fadi Saqqa 3, Mudar Barakat 2.

In another match Al Jalil hosted Al Watani in Irbid and won 65-46.

No surprising results are expected in the upcoming matches Sunday as Al Orthodoxi meet Al Watani and Al Ahli play Al Jalil while Al Jazireh have the day off.

Sunday's matches

☆Orthodoxi-Watani (Orthodoxi) 8 p.m.
Jalil-Ahli (Irbid) 7 p.m.

Standings after Friday's matches

	P	W	L	SF	SA	PTS
Jazireh	6	4	2	445	367	10
Ahli	5	4	1	455	324	9
Orthodoxi	5	4	1	446	346	9
Jalil	6	2	4	331	307	8
Watani	6	—	6	345	593	6

Majoli, Sanchez Vicario to play Pan-Pacific final

TOKYO (R) — Third seed Arantxa Sanchez Vicario beat Conchita Martinez in an all-Spanish semifinal to set up a meeting with giant-killer *Iva Majoli* in Sunday's final of the Pan Pacific Indoor women's tennis tournament.

Sanchez Vicario surprised her compatriot, the world number three, by attacking the net on Saturday to take their match 6-4, 5-7, 6-4.

"I think Conchita was a little bit surprised because she did not expect me to use such tactics," Sanchez Vicario said.

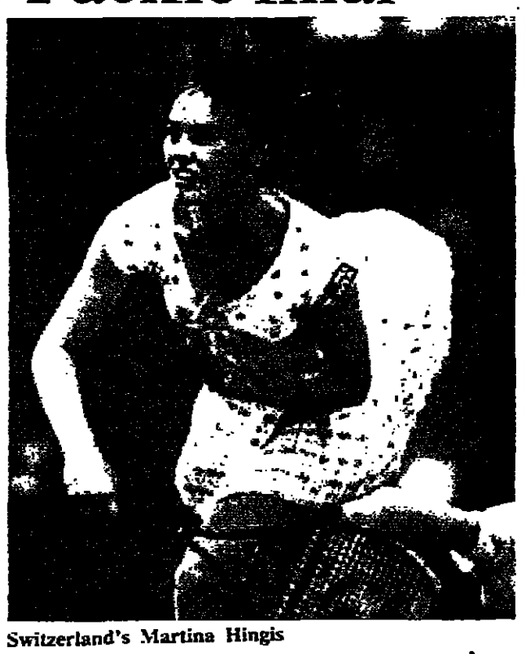
Croatia's Majoli, who knocked top seed Monica Seles out of the quarter-finals, beat Swiss teenager Martina Hingis 3-6, 6-3, 6-0 in the other semifinal.

Majoli, ranked eighth in the world, dropped the first set after Hingis broke her in the fourth game.

The 15-year-old Hingis, a quarter-finalist at last month's Australian Open, went 2-0 up in the second set.

But Majoli, 18, won the next four games and went on to take the set.

"Martina started really well and I did not control the ball in the first set," said Majoli. "But in the middle of the second set I started playing better and concentrated and focused on every point."



Switzerland's Martina Hingis

A dejected Hingis, seeing the match slipping away after her good start, made a lot of unforced errors in the final set.

Sanchez Vicario nearly had her semifinal wrapped up in straight sets. After winning the first set she raced ahead to 5-2 in the second before Martinez fought back to win five games in a row and force a final set.

Sanchez Vicario, 24, said of the final: "I have beaten Iva in all our previous encounters and I will just try to play my game."

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

SPOTTING THE RIGHT DEFENSE

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠Q 10 8 7 2
♡Q 9 5
◇A 5 4
♣7 4

WEST
♠8 5 3
♡J 10 8 3 2
◇K Q
♣A 9 3

EAST
♠K J 6 4
♡7 4
◇J 9 8 6 3 2
♣8 6

SOUTH
♠A
♡A K 7 6
◇10 7
♣K Q J 10 5 2

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣	1♡	1♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: King of ♡.

West Coast ace Mike Lawrence does not believe that, if a suit is good enough to lead As a result, he got an excellent score on this deal from the Board-a-Match Teams at the recent Fall North American Championships in Minneapolis.

Once North could bid voluntarily, South was determined to play in game. Some Souths chose devious routes to get to the highest scoring contract of three no trump; at Lawrence's table the auction was direct.

After a heart lead declarer would have made at least 11 tricks. However, Lawrence found declarer's sole underbelly by selecting the king of diamonds as the initial salvo and continuing with the queen when declarer held up. Looking at all the hands, it is obvious that declarer could have retrieved the lost timing by taking either of the first two tricks, but that is unreasonable in the context of the hand as a whole. Quite properly, South refused to win the second trick as well in an effort to break the defenders' communications.

Lawrence now shifted to a low spade, making it easy for East, Grant Baze, to place declarer with a singleton ace. So although declarer played the seven from the table, Baze simply encouraged with six. When declarer led a club, it was a simple matter for West to grab the ace of clubs and revert to spades, giving the defenders two tricks in that suit for a one-trick set.

African Nations' Cup

S. Africa win title

JOHANNESBURGH (AFP) — Substitute Mark Williams was South Africa's hero here on Saturday as they beat Tunisia 2-0 to win the African Nations Cup on their first attempt.

Wolverhampton Wanderers' Williams, 29, scored with a header in the 72nd minute and a left-foot shot two minutes later in moves started by playmaker Doctor Khumalo.

Just as the match was drifting into obscurity, Williams, who replaced out-of-form Phil Masinga in the 65th minute, hit two goals in three minutes.

A freekick from Khumalo was headed on by Mark Fish and Tunisian keeper Chokri El Quaer saved a point blank header from Eric Tinkler.

The ball bobbled to the righthand by-line and Sizwe Motanug centred for Williams to head home from six-yards.

And, as South Africa were still celebrating, Khumalo floated another cross to Williams who fired left-footed past Tunisian keeper Chokri El Ouaer.

The match had exploded into life after a goalless first half more for grafters and workers than football purists.

South Africa proved they could handle the big event. It was their first major tournament since being readmitted to world football just three and a half years ago.

South Africa, founder members of African confederation CAF, were banned from FIFA in 1960 for refusing to field a multi-racial side.

South Africa took a 13-match unbeaten record into the finals, and, though they lost 1-0 to Egypt in the group, they still won the group.

President Nelson Mandela, who earlier sent a good luck message to Tunisian president Ben Ali, wore Neil Tovey's number nine shirt as he did a lap of the stadium with the South African skipper half an hour before kick-off.

Tunisia had done well to even make the final.

10-man Zambia take third place

Ten-man Zambia took third-place at the African Nations Cup here on Saturday after an opportunist goal by Joel Bwalya for a 1-0 win over Ghana.

With striker Kalusha Bwalya unable to increase his five-goal tally,it was left to his midfield namesake to earn victory in the 52nd minute.

Zambia were reduced to ten-men in the 68th minute when John Lungu was sent off for a second bookable offence by bringing down Ablade Kumah.

Lungu was the fifth player to receive his marching orders in the finals after Burkina Faso's Hassane Kamagate, Mozambique keeper Rui Alves, Zaire's Nzelo Lembi and Ghana's Nii Lamptey.

Zambia gave a run-out to many unused players and Ghana did not field Leeds United's Anthony Yeboah.

☆Previous winners of the African Nations' Cup which was hosted by South Africa from Jan. 13 to Feb. 3.

1957, 1959 Egypt, 1962 Ethiopia, 1963, 1965 Ghan, 1968 Zaire, 1970 Sudan, 1972 Congo, 1974 Zaire, 1976 Morocco, 1978 Ghana, 1980 Nigeria, 1982 Ghana, 1984 Cameroon, 1986 Egypt, 1988 Cameroon, 1990 Algeria, 1992 Ivory Coast, 1994 Nigeria.

☆ Previous hosts of the African Nations' Cup.

1957 Sudan, 1959 Egypt, 1962 Ethiopia, 1963 Ghana, 1965 Tunisia, 1968 Ethiopia, 1970 Sudan, 1972 Cameroon, 1974 Egypt, 1976 Ethiopia, 1978 Ghana, 1980 Nigeria, 1982 Libya, 1984 Ivory Coast, 1986 Egypt, 1988 Morocco, 1990 Algeria, 1992 Senegal, 1994 Tunisia.



Luc Alphand, France's leader of the men's downhill skiing World Cup is sandwiched between Canada's second placed Brian Stemmle (left) and Itlay's third placed Peter Runggaldier after winning the men's downhill race of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, (Reuters photo)

Seizinger seizes World Cup lead

VAL D'ISERE, France (R) — Speed queen Katja Seizinger of Germany seized the lead in the overall World Cup standings with a brillant win in the first of two women's downhills on Saturday.

Seizinger, who had moved four points behind leader Anita Wachter of Austria by winning a super-giant slalom here on Friday, picked up 100 points with her downhill win while a tentative Wachter finished out of the top 20.

A perfect run on a tough, 2.875-km piste similar to the one used in the men's downhills here allowed Seizinger to clock a winning time of one minute 41.70 seconds.

American World Cup downhill champion Picabo Street made few mistakes but had to be content with second place, 0.49 seconds back.

Italy's Isolde Kostner came third 0.54 seconds behind the winner to complete a podium made up of arguably the three finest downhillers on the circuit.

The three had finished in exactly the same order in the downhill at the 1994 Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway.

Alphand tames dangerous Garmisch piste

In Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, Luc Alphand, whose skills on the piste are maturing with age like a wine from his native France, continued his downhill dominance with his third World Cup victory of the season on Friday.

The 30-year-old Frenchman, who until last season had never won a World Cup race, tamed one of the most dangerous mountains on the circuit to take a commanding lead in the downhill standings.

In the penultimate downhill before this month's world championships in Sierra Nevada, the Frenchman attacked Garmisch-Partenkirchen's Kandahar piste to clock one minute 52.61 seconds.

Canada's Brian Stemmle was second in 1:52.95, his best world cup result, and Italy's Peter Runggaldier third, one-hundreth of a second further behind.

The race marked the first downhill on the Kandahar piste since Austria's former world champion Ulrike Maier was killed in a crash two years ago.

The piste had softened in parts because of rising temperatures overnight. But Alphand, who was well aware of the dangers of the course after two crashes here in the past, skied in almost perfectly.

Fine gets certificate of appreciation

FINE HYGIENIC Paper Co. Ltd., has been awarded a certificate of appreciation from the "Consumer Directory Magazine" as a result of a study by the magazine which has been implemented lately to gather consumers opinion of all "Fine" products.

This certificate, praises the superb quality of Fine products due to the special and sincere efforts that Fine Co. takes in producing high standards of quality products that respond to the needs and demands of the Jordanian consumers, thus increasing the standards of our national products.

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL: 634144
PHILADELPHIA
WESLEY SNIPES & YANCY BUTLER in DROP ZONE
Shows: 12:30, 3:00, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 p.m.

CINEMA TEL: 699238
PLAZA
Nabieleh Oubead/safiyah Al Omaree/Farouq Feeshawi in Atabeht Al Settat (ladie's Step) Arabic
Shows: 12:30, 2:15, 6:45, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 677420
CONCORD
CONCORD "1"
* Police Academy
Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30
CONCORD "2"
* Jim Carrie
Shows: 2:30, 6:15

AMMOUN THEATRE & CINEMA/TEL: 618274 - 618275
Alaa Zalzali....in The Golden Bird Operation (Arabic)
Shows: 12:30, 3, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre
TEL: 625155
"Ahlan Tatbie" play
Welcome Normalisation
Shows: 8:30 p.m.
For reservation call 625155

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel to give self-rule council members travel permits

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel will let members of the newly elected Palestinian council travel freely between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, an Israeli official said Saturday. The 88 council members will be issued special permits allowing them to enter Israel on trips between the autonomous Gaza Strip and areas in the West Bank under Palestinian control. The permits will also allow them to use Israel's international airport. The VIP permits give the members "special treatment at crossings" and they won't be affected by Israel's closures of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, said Shlomo Dror, a spokesman for Israeli affairs in the areas. Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza normally cannot enter Israel without a permit. Israel is refusing, however, to let the council member's bodyguards be armed inside Israel, the radio said. The bodyguards hold Palestinian weapons permits that are not recognised by Israel.

Former cabinet minister shot in Lagos

LAGOS (AFP) — Former Nigerian Interior Minister Alex Ibru, the owner of the Guardian press group, was shot and seriously wounded on Friday night in Lagos by unknown gunmen, the paper's management said. Mr. Ibru was taken to a hospital in the Nigerian capital, where his condition was described as critical. The shooting took place in Ikoyi, a residential area of Lagos. Mr. Ibru, a liberal and member of a wealthy and respected business family, is well-known for his pro-democracy views. His newspaper group was founded in 1983 and the daily Guardian is one of the nation's most influential titles. Together with two other independent press groups, it was shot down in summer 1994 by the military junta in a crackdown on the independent press and opposition and union leaders demanding the restoration of democracy.

Chinese president to visit Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Chinese President Jiang Zemin is expected to visit Egypt in May as part of a tour of Africa when he will also travel in Ethiopia, the Egyptian president's office said here Saturday. Mr. Jiang's trip follows an invitation from his Egyptian counterpart Hosni Mubarak, and he will be accompanied by a large delegation including ministers of foreign affairs, economy, external trade, agriculture and industry. The two leaders are set to sign several cooperation accords on technology, commerce and investments.

Top Chinese legislator murdered at home

BEIJING (AFP) — Li Peiyao, vice-chairman of China's top legislative body — the National People's Congress (NPC) standing committee — has been murdered in a scuffle with a thief at his Beijing home, Xinhua said Saturday. "The murderer sneaked into Li's residence early in the morning on Feb. 2 to steal property," the official news agency said. "Li was murdered in fighting with him," it said, adding that the unidentified murderer had been arrested following a police investigation. Li, 63, was elected to the position of NPC standing committee vice chairman in 1993.

Kurd refugees call off hunger strike

ISLAMABAD (R) — A group of Iraqi Kurdish refugees in Pakistan has ended a hunger strike after failing to achieve their demand for resettlement in a third country, the Union of Kurd Refugees said on Saturday. The Islamabad-based union said in a statement that 29 Kurds had called off their protest in response to appeals from unidentified Kurdish organisations based in Europe. It accused the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of "inhumanity" towards the hunger strikers. Five Kurds began a hunger strike outside the UNHCR office in Islamabad on Dec. 10 and were later joined by 23 others. Six Kurdish women began a one-week hunger strike on Jan. 28. A UNHCR spokesman said last week that resettlement applications had already been made on an exceptional basis for all of the 1,116 Iraqi Kurds living in Pakistan, of which 79 had been accepted and 224 were pending.

3 Aideed aides missing after ambush

MOGADISHU (R) — Three senior aides to Somali warlord Mohammad Farah Aideed are missing after an ambush laid by members of the rival Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA), security sources close to General Aideed said on Saturday. Jama Farah Daqarre, chief of protocol of Gen. Aideed's "presidential office," Mohammad Abdi Omar, a senior financial advisor, and Abid Jiir, a militia commander, went missing after RRA gunmen fired a rocket-propelled grenade into the rear of the vehicle in which the three were travelling, said officials who asked not to be named. The vehicle's driver later died of injuries sustained during the ambush and a bodyguard was killed, they said.

Ferry hijackers face up to 21 years jail

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkish prosecutors are seeking up to 21 years jail for nine pro-Chechen gunmen who hijacked a Black Sea ferry last month with around 200 passengers on board, the state-controlled Anatolian news agency said. The hijackers — six Turks, two Chechens and an ethnic Abkhaz from Georgia — were remanded in custody by a security court on Thursday and taken to an Istanbul jail. It was unclear when the court would sit again. Anatolian, quoting the indictment prepared against the gunmen, said they would be charged under two separate penal articles for an armed group hijack and illegally restricting people's freedom with the use of threats and weapons. It said the two charges carried total sentences of between nine-and-a-half years and 21 years, but gave no further details

Khartoum sees U.S. 'conspiracy' within U.N.

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir denounced a U.N. vote condemning Sudan as an American "conspiracy," the daily Al Engaz Al Watani reported on Saturday.

"Sudan will not be frightened by these conspiracies and will not be bothered by the claims of enemies, which will only make stronger our attachment to Islam," said Lieutenant-General Bashir.

Gen. Bashir expressed his regret at the "rush" by Ethiopia to put before the U.N. Security Council its dispute with Sudan over three militants which Addis Ababa has accused Khartoum of harboring.

Ethiopia took the matter to the U.N. "under pressure from certain countries, especially the United States," Gen. Bashir said, quoted by the paper.

It was Gen. Bashir's first reaction to the Wednesday vote by the Security Council condemning Sudan and demanding that it turn over to Ethiopia the three suspects in the failed June attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa.

The president praised Russia, China and a number of non-aligned nations who expressed reservations over the resolution and demanded changes.

Gen. Bashir vowed Sudan would stick to its "Islamic philosophy despite the conspiracies being drawn up" against it.

After the U.N. vote, Washington decided to recall its diplomatic personnel from Sudan.

Vatican assails Sudan

The Vatican on Saturday accused Sudan of torturing a priest of force him to confess to plotting to blow up military installations and aid a political opposition movement.

The Vatican said Mark Lotede was imprisoned in Juba, in the south of Sudan, before Christmas and released in Khartoum on Jan. 16.

In a letter sent to the Sudanese foreign ministry, the Vatican denied the priest "or any other member of the Catholic Church" had plotted against the government.

The Vatican also accused Khartoum of torturing a student to force him to accuse the priest of the plot and of organising the evacuation of students to areas held by opposition forces.

Refugees return

More than 200 Sudanese refugees in the Central African Republic have returned home in the past two days under a United Nations programme, the official news agency SUNA reported Saturday.

A first group of around 100 arrived by plane in Khartoum on Thursday, followed by a second wave of 114 Sudanese on Friday, SUNA said, adding that the repatriations were to continue through Monday.

The repatriations are part of a programme in cooperation with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to return 500 Sudanese from Central Africa.



An old women from the Srebrenica enclave, which was overrun by Serbs last summer, hurl stones at a local government building in Tuzla to demand action to local missing Muslim men from Srebrenica following the Serb seizure of the town (AFP photo)

Bosnia rejects Serb police presence

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic said here Saturday that letting Serb police stay in four Sarajevo neighbourhoods past a deadline for allowing transfer of these districts was illegal.

"It is a wrong interpretation of this part of the Dayton (peace) agreement and the presence of Serb police in the following 45 days is illegal," Mr. Izetbegovic said after meeting U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

The Dayton agreement that ended in December Bosnia's nearly four-year war orders four Serb-held Sarajevo neighbourhoods and suburbs to be handed over to the Muslim-Croat federation. A first deadline fell at midnight Saturday for Serb forces to be pulled out and for a changeover in civil authority.

The federation can move in its army and population on March 20, 45 days later.

A grey area seems to be emerging over who will guarantee police protection during the interim period, with High Representative Carl Bildt, the civil arm of the Dayton accord, saying Friday that Serb police and civil authority could remain.

Mr. Izetbegovic said Saturday that he had "expressed our dissatisfaction with the decision of Mr. Bildt that for the following 45 days there is a presence of Serb police."

Bosnian Republic Prime Minister Hasan Muratovic blasted Mr. Bildt's decision in a press statement Friday, and warned that it could unravel the peace process.

He said U.N. civilian police should be guaranteeing security in the Serb-held districts.

An American soldier was killed Saturday in a mine explosion in Bonsia, the U.S. army said. He was the first U.S. soldier to die in action in Bosnia.

The soldier, whose name was being withheld pending notification of next of kin, was wounded at a checkpoint near the town of Gradacac, 40 kilometres north of Tuzla at 3:45 p.m. local time (1445 GMT).

The soldier was flown to an army surgical hospital nearby, but was pronounced dead.

"We believe he was on foot, a spokesman said. But further details were not immediately available.

An estimated three to six million mines are scattered across Bosnia.

President Bill Clinton was briefed about the death during a campaign stop in New Hampshire. Asked by a reporter whether the accident gave him second thoughts about the Bosnian mission, he said, "No, not at all."

"I told the American people before it started, the place was filled with mines," Mr. Clinton said, noting that other allied troops had been killed in landmine accidents.

Earlier, Mr. Christopher, who is pressing rival leaders in former Yugoslavia to honour the terms of the Dayton agreement forged by U.S. diplomacy, said he was pleased with its progress.

"In an overall sense I am very pleased with what I hear about compliance with the Dayton accord," he told reporters aboard his plane while in flight over Bosnia.

Apache helicopters patrolled above Sarajevo airport as he landed, and his convoy took a back road rather than the city's notorious "sniper alley." Peacekeeping troops have been the targets of a rash of sniper attacks this week.

Earlier Mr. Christopher spent two hours in Tuzla, the main U.S. base in northeast Bosnia, and addressed several hundred American and allied troops who are part of the 60,000-member NATO-led force helping to implement the peace agreement.

He arrived in Zagreb on Friday night and held talks with Franjo Tudjman in which he urged the Croatian president to adhere strictly to the Dayton accord, saying economic benefits dependend on Zagreb's compliance.

IAEA: Germans trained Iraqi engineers

VIENNA (R) — Iraqi nuclear engineers, known to be specialists in piping and welding, received training in Germany and other Western countries before the Gulf war, an official of the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog agency said on Friday.

The engineers worked at Iraq's two pre-war civil research reactors at Tuwaitha, near Baghdad, where international experts later found evidence of a clandestine bomb-making programme, the official said.

"It is known to us that Iraqi engineers trained in Germany before the Gulf war," Hans Meyer, a spokesman for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told Reuters.

"There were many foreign companies training Iraqi people," he added.

Mr. Meyer said the Iraqi engineers who spent time at one German firm were trained specifically in piping and welding — part of crucial expertise needed for safety maintenance of any civil nuclear research reactor.

Training foreign engineers in the civil nuclear industry is permissible under article four of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty but doubts were later raised on the wisdom of imparting know-how to Iraqis at a time when intelligence services suspected Baghdad was developing arms of mass destruction.

Knowledge of high-tech welding practices would have been particularly beneficial to Iraq's secret ambition to put together a delivery system for a nuclear bomb or missile.

Parts of expertly-turned steel tubes were intercepted by British customs officials in 1991 in what was believed to be segments of a so-called super gun.

Welding those steel parts together would have required expert handling and the Tuwaitha engineers may have garnered the necessary experience to do so, an IAEA source said.

The super gun affair set off a ripple effect of investigations and trials across Europe, with some firms found to have supplied weapons parts to Baghdad in breach of what appeared to be a lightly-applied arms embargo.

Three executives of Swiss engineering group Von Roll were found guilty by a court in Lausanne on Wednesday of illegally exporting parts of a planned super gun to Iraq.

Next week a senior British judge will issue his long-awaited report on British arms sales to Iraq in the 1980s after a three-year probe, which could see ministerial heads roll.

The Vienna-based IAEA was entrusted by the U.N. Security Council after the Gulf war to rid Iraq of what remained of its nuclear infrastructure, much of which was destroyed by U.S.-led allied bombing raids during the war.

An IAEA report to the Security Council last month said several foreign nuclear experts had assisted Iraq in developing its nuclear bomb plans.

A German scientist, apparently on the run, was cited as being "a key figure" in the clandestine programme and was an expert in centrifuges, which Baghdad needed to manufacture enriched uranium — the key ingredient in an atomic bomb.

Iraq was apparently planning to enrich radioactive fuel from its French and Russian research reactors in Tuwaitha.

An IAEA official said this week that a German-made machine for manufacturing carbon fibres, destined for Iraq before the Gulf war, had gone missing.

The high-tech equipment had the potential of creating ultra-resistant carbon fibre rotors in a part of the centrifuge which spins uranium at high velocity in order to enrich it.

Statistics on Jordanian 'minorities' -- a guessing game

By Alia Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The numerical strength of minorities in Jordan, whether ethnic or religious, has never been officially established, despite periodical census and surveys. This has led to calculated and intelligent guesses at best and pure speculation at worst.

If Jordanians had expected the 1994 population census to disclose official figures regarding the various minorities in the Kingdom, they were disappointed, especially when one considers the criticisms that abound relating to the nature of the questions asked, and the manner in which the census was conducted.

Many viewed it as classifying household members as refugees or displaced persons, as well as as inquiring about personal matters such as religious affiliation, income, and property ownership. However, the findings were not translated into concrete data made available to the public. This angered many who felt that their privacy was infringed upon with little to show for it.

Hani Hourani, of the New Jordan Research Centre, told the Jordan Times Friday that the Department of Statistics, which carried out the census, should have either refrained from asking questions relating to issues it regarded as "sensitive" (such as Jordanians of Palestinian origin and religion), or asked the questions as it did, and then announced its findings.

Dr. Abdul Hadi Alawin, director general of the Department of Statistics, told the Jordan Times last week that categorising Jordanians under religious or ethnic groupings, was "not a priority," adding that "we (the department of statistics) did not find it (the percentage of minorities in Jordan) very important."

However, this position does not necessarily answer the often-heard question of the ethnic and religious composition in Jordan, whether for statistical purposes or for knowledge of the make-up of the society.

"It is very important to know the ethnic and religious composition of the population, or else the Jordanian society will be under wrong impressions and will believe in false information and exaggerated figures," Mr. Hourani said. "The absence of information actually increases (political or social) sensitives in the country."

Mustapha Hamarneh, director of the Centre of Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, stressed that "in a modern society, any information concerning the demographic composition of the population ought not be kept secret." Such information helps social scientists enhance objective research on the study of society as a whole, he asserted.

A high-ranking official said that regardless of the religious or ethnic background of various members of the population "there are no minorities in Jordan — we are all Jordanian."

According to the census data released last week, 92.4 per cent of Jordan's 4.13 million population are Jordanian. Dr. Alawin explained at a press conference last week that Jordanians were defined as those who carry Jordanian passports, whether valid for two or five years.

The Department of Statistics has never examined the percentage of ethnic minorities in Jordan, according to Dr. Alawin.

As for religious minorities, he said that although the 1994 census asked households to state their religion, the department did not find it important to disclose its findings.

Kamal Saleh of the Department of Statistics said the last survey disclosing religious minorities in the Kingdom was carried out in 1987. According to the survey, a copy of which was obtained by the Jordan Times, Christians accounted for 3.2 per cent of a population of 2,885,000, while "others" (such as Bahai's) accounted for roughly 0.05 per cent.

The margin of error in this study was considerably large as it included non-Jordanians living in the country at the time, said Mr. Saleh. He added that the department sampled a small percentage of the entire population in Jordan, targeting certain cities and their suburbs.

According to a senior source in the Jordanian Christian community who requested anonymity, Jordanian Christians number around 120,000 (approximately three per cent of the population). However, many Christians said this figure was too low, though they were unable to provide an estimate.

As for the controversial issue of the numerical strength of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, Fahed Al Fanek, a prominent Jordanian columnist, wrote in the Arabic daily Al Ra'i Tuesday that they accounted for 46 per cent of the population. Dr. Fanek, however, refused to disclose his source of information to the Jordan Times.

The percentage of Jordanians of Palestinian origin has been widely disputed — with percentages ranging from 35 per cent to 70 per cent. However, many commentators maintain that the figure must be nearly 50 per cent, but even this has not been substantiated.

An estiamte by Mr. Hourani puts the percentage of Jordanians of Palestinian origin around 50 per cent. "The percentage fluctuates according to political events in the region," he said. "For instance it incresed following the Gulf war, as many holding Jordanian passports returned to Jordan. It could possibly decrease with the development of state-building in the West Bank and Gaza."

According to the Department of Statistics, categorising the population in terms of

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COLUMN 10

Fox kills Buckingham Palace flamingoes

LONDON (R) — A fox ha wiped out the flamingoe of Buckingham Palace Bri-tain's royalty-besotte newspapers reported Sa turday. Six of the exoti birds which lived on a lak in the spacious grounds o Queen Elizabeth's centra London home were killed by the predator, and the seventh died of shock. The lake froze in wintry weather, and the ice is thought to have given the fox its chance to reach their island home. A palace spokeswoman, asked whether the flamingoes would be replaced, was quoted in the London Times as saying: "We certainly won't even consider it until we've caught the fox."

Ideal man is 'successful, attentive and faithful'

TORONTO (AFP) — All you tall, dark and handsome guys, give it up. The ideal man is successful, attentive and a good friend, according to a poll done for Valentines Day for the Harlequin romance publishers. Twenty-two per cent of the 5,000 women from 18 countries polled said that they were looking for a successful, powerful businessman, while 15 per cent said that they wanted a doctor, dentist or other professional. The ideal man cannot put too much emphasis on his career, a majority of women said, while only nine per cent wanted someone obsessed with their career. But more than half the women polled said that they wanted a partner who was their best friend, while 36 per cent said they wanted someone who would enjoy spending time with the children. Just five per cent of Harlequin romance novel-readers said that physical beauty was of top importance while seven per cent wanted a "sexy" man. Eighteen per cent agreed that they wanted someone who was tender and attentive and had a sense of humour. And nearly 18 per cent said that a man was flawed if he left dirty clothes lying about while 16 per cent said they would be bothered by snoring. In another survey, which only Americans answered, Harlequin found that 46 per cent of women preferred to get a good night's sleep rather than make love.

Chinese city halts sale of Japan warship model

BEIJING (R) — Angry citizens in a north China city forced a local department store to halt sales of toy models of an infamous Japanese World War II battleship, the official People's Daily reported Saturday. The uproar was triggered by media reports in the northern city of Harbin that miniature replicas of the battleship Yamato and 10 other Japanese warships were on sale at the city's Number 1 Department Store, the paper said. Harbin was occupied by Japan from 1932 until the war ended in 1945. The battleship Yamato, then the world's largest, was sunk by U.S. forces in waters off southeast Japan in mid-1945. Last month a Harbin newspaper mounted a campaign against the sale of the toys, warning that "the shadow of those years of fascist war is once again making an incursion," the daily said. The article sparked fierce responses from many older people in Harbin, a strategic centre in Japan's 1930s puppet state of Manchukuo and the site of notorious Japanese germ warfare tests using live Chinese prisoners as Guinea pigs.